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NEW LIFE IN THE OLD PRAYER-MEETING

New Life in the Old Prayer-Meeting

By
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CONTENTS

	Introduction	7
I.	Shall the Prayer-Meeting be Hybridized?	21
II.	Shall the Minister Always Lead?	27
III.	When the Minister Leads	33
IV.	The Motive for Lay Reading	38
V.	Hiding Behind the Message	46
VI.	Dummy Leaders, and Real Leaders	52
VII.	On Being Fit to Lead	59
VIII.	The Prayer-Meeting Leader and His Bible	65
IX.	More Bible and Less Topic	73
X.	Harnessing the Hymn-Book to the Prayer-Meeting	78
XI.	More Prayer in the Prayer-Meeting	86
XII.	The Blackboard and Object-Lessons in the Prayer-Meeting	93
XIII.	How to Avoid Monotonous Meetings	103
XIV.	Getting Mute Mouths Open	115
XV.	Littles, that Make or Mar a Meeting	125
XVI.	Prayer-Meetings that Sag	134
XVII.	A Cure for Self-Centred Prayer-Meetings	142
XVIII.	A Juicy Temperance Prayer-Meeting	153
XIX.	Missionary Meetings that Thrill	161
XX.	Suggestive Plans for Prayer-Meetings	195
XXI.	Plans for Special Days	209
XXII.	Open-Air, and Special Prayer-Meetings	219
	Appendix	226

INTRODUCTION

MOST churches hold at least two prayer-meetings a week :—the congregational prayer-meeting, and the young people's prayer-meeting. Connected with both are problems that perplex pastors and church workers. Many of the problems of both meetings are identical, for fundamentally the meetings are the same—based upon prayer, and Christian song, and testimony. The same help is therefore suited to both meetings, in the main, and to all other prayer-meetings, in the Y. M. C. A., the Y. W. C. A., in schools, and elsewhere.

In this book of plans and helps for all the prayer-meetings, this fundamental similarity of all prayer-meetings is kept in mind. Much of this matter is presented with the conviction that it will have value for the congregational prayer-meeting, the young people's prayer-meeting, and the various other prayer-meetings; what is good for the one is good for the other, with reasonable exceptions. We believe, especially, that the congregational prayer-meeting, and the young people's prayer-meeting should not be so radically unlike in method and atmosphere that it will not be natural and easy for the young people to

graduate into the regular church prayer-meeting. To this end there should be occasional joint meetings, and an interchange of leaders and ideas. If any of the helps offered in this book shall promote such a happy result, or shall give new interest to any decadent prayer-meeting, the writer will rejoice.

However, certain suggestions in this book may seem pertinent only to the congregational meeting, or to the young people's meeting. Such suggestions have been so differentiated from the others that no one need lose time. Most of the practical plans have been tested. The book is a clearing-house for prayer-meeting plans that have been successful. Everything is so fully indexed in the back of the book that the busiest people will find it easy to get at definite things.

Lest it may appear presumptious in the writer to seem to take it for granted that the prayer-meeting is in a bad way, and needs his help to set it right, the result of extended personal observations is given here, in an impartial way. As it will be awkward to carry on this narrative, speaking impersonally, the first person will be adopted.

Just to feel the pulse of the regular church prayer-meeting, I visited consecutively twelve churches, in six denominations. I was surprised and pained at the woeful lack of interest in the prayer-meeting, but convinced that the explana-

tion, too often, was in the poor quality of the meeting. To be honest, the meagrely-attended service was not the kind of service that one would want to go to the second time. The indictment may not seem so harsh when the facts upon which it is based have been told.

Prayer-meeting Number One had an attendance of fifty, filling less than one-third of the room. Probably the morning congregation of that church numbers four hundred and fifty. The best feature was a young layman as leader, a custom once a month. I counted four prayers, including two by the leader and one by the pastor. There were eight testimonies, including two by women, who constituted half the audience. The singing was weak, and little of it. The remarks and prayers of the leader, and a sermonette by the minister, consumed considerably more than half the hour. Regarding the theme, "Our talents," I could recall, a few days later, but one practical suggestion. Being accompanied by a member of the church, I was introduced to several persons, and received a warmer greeting than the stranger gets in the average city prayer-meeting. This church, I may say, is one of the leading in its denomination. On the whole the meeting gave the impression of a second-rate performance—weak and nerveless.

Prayer-meeting Number Two was led by the two pastors of the church. The seventy-five present

were a larger proportion of the Sunday congregation than in the first instance. Four prayers were offered, and six testimonies besides those of the pastors. One pastor announced the hymns, and prayed and spoke, and the other pastor read the scripture and prayed and spoke twice. The two ministers took half of the time, but were rather less professional than ministers usually are in their tone and manner; one even wore a sack coat. The theme was, "How to express our thanksgiving," and there was considerable warmth and spirit in the responses and the singing. This is one of the struggling down-town churches.

Number Three was the congregational prayer-meeting of the wealthiest and most noted church of one denomination. The attendance, seventy-five, was probably about one-tenth of a Sunday morning congregation. They were mostly the middle-aged or elderly. But one prayer was offered, and the pastor lectured on Palestine. I am told that the lectures were designed to attract a larger number, so we may surmise what the attendance on a prayer-meeting proper would have been in this prominent church.

Number Four had an attendance of sixty, the Sunday morning congregations being from three hundred to four hundred. The pastor announced the prayer-meeting theme on the church calendar. He had asked certain persons to discuss

assigned phases of the topic, and others to read selected Scripture passages. The responses were good. There was more of an effort to make it "the people's service" than in any of the twelve meetings; but the machinery was rather too obvious. Half a dozen prayers were offered, and twice as many took part in other ways. The theme was, "How we enjoy our religion." One brother who had been assigned the topic, "The peace we have in Christ," took the "off" side, and asserted that what most church members needed was not peace, but warfare. Just before closing, the pastor remarked, with some perturbation, that he had been the target of a good deal of criticism about the length of his sermons and other things. It was very easy, he warmly protested, to pick prayer-meeting topics to pieces, and more to that effect, which gave rather a peppery ending to the meeting; but perhaps that was better than the impression of stagnation given by the previous meetings. This church, which is suburban, has more than average prayer-meetings, and the pastor is unusually sweet-spirited and earnest.

Number Five had an attendance of thirty, in a room that would seat two hundred. The pastor led, beginning late because the pianist had not come. He led the singing, which dragged. Five prayers were offered, and ten testimonies given. The minister spoke fifteen or twenty min-

utes, and then, with what looked like an effort at facetiousness said, "Now you must talk; I am all in." A retired minister prayed for five minutes, and exhorted for about the same time. The theme was, "The birth of Jesus," but there was no atmosphere of gladness. There were few young people. While waiting for the pianist, the pastor attempted to get acquainted with the stranger, and transfixing him with his eye, in the meeting, said, "Will that brother please pray?" The atmosphere of the room was close and musty, the lights were dim, and on the whole, the effect of the few in the large, inhospitable room, was depressing. The church is in a residence and tenement-house district, surrounded by foreigners.

About twenty-five persons were present at Number Six, and the room would easily hold ten times that number. A retired minister, supplying the pulpit, led the devotions in a delightfully informal way. Several times he addressed persons by name, and carried on conversations. "I met Mr. So-and-so on the train, to-day," he broke out. "You know him, Brother Smith; he spoke of you, and I told him I would tell you. Maybe you will look after him a little, and try to get him to come to church." After another had spoken, he asked, "Where have I met you before?" There were three prayers, and four testimonies, but the genial, sincere personality of

the leader left a refreshing aroma, and helped to make Christian brotherhood seem very real. So much does the unaffected whole-heartedness of the leader count!

There were two ministers on the platform, in prayer-meeting Number Seven, and it was a very high platform, and the seventy-five people seemed almost a mile away. Three prayers were offered, only one from the pews. The Scripture-reading and exposition by the pastor, and "remarks" by the visiting minister, with some business, left no time for testimonies on the interesting theme, "Why I know I am a Christian." More's the pity. This is a down-town church, with a Sunday evening congregation of a thousand.

Number Eight was not a church prayer-meeting, but in a rescue mission, on a street five blocks long, with seventeen pawn-shops, and eight places in which liquor is sold. The room was small, and very plain, but brightly lighted. More gas would help some prayer-meetings almost as much as more prayer. The opening singing could be heard two blocks away, and it lasted fifteen or twenty minutes, until every one in the neighbourhood knew that there was "something doing." Two persons stood on the sidewalk to invite passers-by to come in. Some fifty men and women, many blear-eyed and "boozy," gathered. On the platform a little company of workers backed up the leader, a railroad man, who

spoke five minutes, chiefly in telling how Christ had saved him from drink. A few prayers and songs, and he called for testimonies. They came thick and fast until twenty had been counted. Nine of those speaking told how they had found Christ in that room. More prayer and singing, and an appeal to those that wanted the same Christ, accompanied by some earnest personal work in the rear of the room, and three men came forward to make a new start. One of them gave up a bottle of whiskey. The whole meeting was electric. One was conscious of a power that accompanied the songs and prayers and simple testimonies. These men are not the easiest to move: sin has a powerful grip on them, yet every week some give up the old life. One could not help feeling, as some expressed it, "This is the 'real thing.'" In summer this little room is intolerably hot and foul, yet from thirty to fifty come into the prayer-meetings, *every night*, while churches are closed, or left with a corporal's guard.

Prayer-meeting Number Nine was led by a deaconess, the pastor of the church being ill. Seventeen persons were present, and there were five prayers and four testimonies. The singing, though limited in volume, was spirited, a precentor stimulating all present to do their best. There was considerable spiritual warmth, but one felt from the meagre attendance that the church

did not prize this service very highly, or was treating it shabbily. The end of the church fronting the street was in total darkness. There was absolutely nothing to indicate to a passer-by that an important religious service, at which Jesus Christ was pledged to be present, was going on within.

Quite different was the case with Number Ten. The front of the church was brilliantly lighted and, facing the street, was a bulletin-board announcing in bold type the prayer-meeting and its theme, and cordially inviting strangers to enter. This was the only church in the number that took the public into its confidence in this open-hearted way. I believe Number Two has a bulletin-board, but the style of announcing the themes is so hackneyed and so utterly divorced from any suggestion of practical religion, that I have felt as I read them in passing that they must disgust and repel practical men. In the vestibule of church Number Ten, strangers were greeted by a hearty hand-clasp and a cordial invitation to feel "at home," while even the regular attendants received a pleasant nod of recognition. Such a reception thawed the stranger out and prepared him for what he saw when ushered within—fully two hundred people at a prayer-meeting! And the rest of the meeting was as quickening. One forgot to count prayers and testimonies. The spirit of prayer was abun-

dantly manifest. The pastor was absent in revival services, but the church had a revival swing and thrill in its prayer-meeting. This is a down-town church that is being crowded by the influx of foreigners, and is supposed to have hard lines. It is the only prayer-meeting of the twelve that satisfied the visitor's conception of the strength and helpfulness there ought to be in such a service, in normal conditions.

Number Eleven was much like the first seven. The attendance was about one-tenth that of the Sunday congregation, which fraction, it will be noted, seems to be the average. In interest and animation, the service would rate not more than one-twentieth the Sunday services. The pastor, in his full ministerial garb, delivered a ten-minute discourse, in a sing-song tone, and afterwards sharply scolded those present for the remissness of those who stayed away. He declared that it was a shame and disgrace that so few came out, and talked vaguely about discontinuing. He offered no suggestion for improvement. Some hung their heads, and others bit their mustaches and scowled. There was a hopeless, dejected air. There were two desultory prayers, besides the pastor's, and many, who had been craning their necks to watch the clock, seemed glad when the meeting closed.

Number Twelve was the village prayer-meeting. The church boasted no separate prayer-

meeting room, but the meeting was in the same room in which the Sunday services were held. The pastor compromised, however, by standing in front of the pulpit, instead of behind it. A small organ belonging to the Sunday-school was used, in place of the "pipe" organ. The front pews were conspicuously empty, with the exception of one occupied by Deacon A—— who always sat in that particular seat, at funerals, on Children's Day, and every other occasion. Another front pew was occupied by an elderly woman, evidently partially deaf. In the rearmost pew were the younger people, some of them whispering and smiling. A bat found its way into the room and flitted from side to side, causing the young girls to dodge and all but shriek when it dipped near their heads. The prayer-meeting droned along, after it once got started. The people were late coming in. As long as there was any daylight lingering, the men stayed outside, leaning against the churchyard fence, talking about the crops, the weather, and the elections. The minister spoke of heaven, and duty, and love, and obedience, purely in the abstract and in unnatural tones. He seemed a sublimated and vastly different man from the one who, after the meeting was over, would take folks by the hand and ask in his natural voice, "Good-evening, Sister Smith; how is Mary getting along with the mumps?" or, "How do you, Brother Jones; I

hope you won't lose the colt that was hurt," or, "Hello, Bob! Home from college? Heard good reports of you." The prayers and remarks were mostly of that same other-worldly type, that really mean little to a healthy mind, and have no point of contact with the every-day life. For the most part, the deacon prayed as he had heard his father pray, and the Sunday-school superintendent spoke in phrases he had heard the minister and others use. There was little that impressed one as real talking with God, or little that sounded like fresh and living experience with His power. I don't say it was not there: it did not seem to get expression in a way that would impress an unbeliever that there was some supernatural force and personality in the meeting.

I do not say that this was a typical village prayer-meeting. I know there are some vastly better. I do not hold that counting the number of prayers is an adequate test of any prayer-meeting: prayers are weighed in heaven. I may be urged justly that there is a great undercurrent of unexpressed devotion in every prayer-meeting; that the real prayer-meeting is within the soul and not without. I firmly believe that. But that for which I shall contend, in these pages, is that the prayer-meeting needs to be more truly the exponent of the church life. There may be a vast deal of spiritual earnestness that will find expression outside the prayer-

meeting, but never make itself known there. But to the world, the prayer-meeting is the spiritual pulse of the church, and just as there must be something wrong with gold dollars which one could not sell for fifty cents, so there must be a fault in a church with spiritual energies for other things, whose prayer-meeting lives at a "poor, dying rate."

In conclusion let me express a hope that these frank statements may lead many others who have been observing and thinking on this problem to make known to me their views. I invite correspondence. Particularly I am desirous of getting into touch with a larger number of ministers and lay prayer-meeting workers who have tried innovations on the set ways of the prayer-meeting, and who have plans which they think will be helpful to other churches.

I

SHALL THE PRAYER-MEETING BE HYBRIDIZED?

The suggestion has come from a leading denominational weekly that, since the midweek prayer seems to have waned in many churches, it might be best to abandon the idea of a meeting chiefly for prayer and testimony, and turn it into a forum for the discussion of religious, social, ethical, and civic questions. While wishing to treat the suggestion with the utmost courtesy, it seems to resolve itself into this kind of a prescription: If Christians are not inclined to pray in public, invite them to do something for which they have an inclination. Doctor the symptom, not the disease. Is a fifty-two-session open parliament supposedly on such questions as, "Does poverty cause drunkenness, or *vice versa?*" or, "Is trust money tainted?" or, "Shall we have the initiative and referendum?" as well calculated to go to the root of the matter, as a prescription for developing more prayer in the prayer-meeting?

The prayer-meeting may be decrepit in many churches, but, in the interest of vital piety, is a current events club the best successor? Shall we

hybridize the prayer-meeting, or vitalize it? Would Wesley ever have sown the American continent with Methodist churches by the help of prayer and class meetings hybridized as is proposed above? A dead-alive prayer-meeting may make over into a lively lyceum, but the most spirited lyceum can never fill the place in the vital life of the church that a better prayer-meeting would have filled.

Therefore, before we proceed with the doubtful experiment of hybridizing the church or young people's prayer-meeting, by bringing free discussions of newspaper themes into the place of prayer, or by turning it into a "smoke talk," or, as was suggested for the young people's prayer-meeting at a religious convention recently virtually making it an annex to an all-inclusive Association of Somewhat Religiously Disposed Young Persons for Doing a Little of Everything under the Sun, let us consider if there is not some better way; if there are not undeveloped, latent possibilities in the old, half-dead prayer-meeting that can be awakened for its regeneration.

In Mexico there are gold mines that long ago were worked by the Indians in the most primitive fashion, until they were seemingly exhausted, when they were abandoned. Now, according to this modern religious theory, the only outcome for such mines would be to turn them into ostrich

farms, or cold-storage warehouses. If a mine didn't pay with primitive pick and shovel, make it half mine and half ice-plant, or one-fourth mine and three-fourths summer resort; that might solve the problem of getting the most riches out of the mine.

But the mining expert, the man of hard sense, says, "No; the way to make the old mine pay is to work it better—but as a *mine*." So, to-day, modern machinery supplants the rude implements of the Indian, in many an abandoned Mexican mine; and under the régime of the steam and electric stamp and smelter, fabulous wealth is being extracted, where primitive man gave up discouraged.

The prayer-meeting must keep to the primitive ideal, but not the primitive methods. A more rational and thoroughgoing treatment promises new results. The belief that primitive, pick-and-shovel methods are to blame for much of the falling off in interest in the prayer-meeting, stimulates the following rudimentary suggestions, which will be the basis of this book, and will be developed in detail in subsequent chapters.

I start with the premise that much prayer in the church has always meant power, and that there is no substitute for prayer. A lack of prayer means low spirituality. The revivals in Japan, Australia, England, Wales have been *prayed down*. To turn the prayer-meeting into

a social and ethical department store, with a prayer counter in a corner of the basement, will be fatal. The church needs more prayer, and the way to get it is not by having *less prayer-meeting*. Instead of hybridizing the prayer-meeting, we need to *vitalize* it. How? Let me barely outline the answer here:

1. If the prayer-meeting is losing power under its present leadership, why not change the leadership, at least in part? We have a suggestion of the splendid possibilities in lay leadership, in young people's societies, in the Gideons, in the numerous city and rescue missions in charge of laymen, in the Y. M. C. A., the Student Volunteer Movement, etc. The First Baptist Church, of Boston, is trying a lay leader for its prayer-meeting, once a month, with encouraging results. In its leadership, as well as in participation, make the prayer-meeting, as much as possible, a meeting "of the people, for the people, by the people."

2. In many prayer-meetings there would be gain, not only in a partial change of leaders, but in a change of *methods*. Everywhere the Sunday-school is adopting new pedagogic methods —kindergartens, Perry pictures, the stereoscope, the stereopticon, organized classes, orchestras, etc. For the most part the prayer-meeting is from a half to a quarter of a century behind the Sunday-school, the Y. M. C. A. and the pulpit.

It is the mine that is still worked with pick and shovel.

The comparatively small proportion of prayer-meetings that have moved out of the old ruts—not by becoming something other than prayer-meetings—but by becoming modern prayer-meetings, with prayer, testimony and devotional singing as the dominant features, give hopeful promise of what is possible, provided the same amount of brains is put into the prayer-meeting that is put into other religious problems. The trouble is that so many seem to believe that we may leave our brains on the hat-rack when we go to the prayer-meeting; prayer is so pious an act that it will take care of itself without an expenditure of gray matter.

3. Besides new leadership and new methods, the half-dead prayer-meeting needs a *new perspective*. It is self-centred. It looks in; it needs to look out. People have been going to it to pray largely for themselves and their own church. Prayer lags when we have nothing but ourselves to pray about. Selfishness always stagnates. Give the old prayer-meeting the outward, the Christward, the humanward look; give it the evangelistic and the missionary perspective, and in the place of stagnation, and green scum, and croaking, it will have bubbling, sparkling, overflowing life.

We need to change the pool into a fountain;

the Dead Sea into Croton Reservoir, a Niagara of power. To do this we need, in many cases, a new line of prayer-meeting topics. Too many of our topics are introspective; they deal with the subjective phases of Christian life. Add to new leadership, and new methods, topics that set the people to praying for some one else besides, "Me and my wife, my son John, and his wife, us four and no more," and a new and strong volume of earnest prayer will swell the heart of the church and rise through the land, a mighty tide of spiritual power.

II

SHALL THE MINISTER ALWAYS LEAD?

"YES" and "No," in answer to the above question. If the midweek service is to be simply a midweek lecture—a third preaching service—then of course the minister will always lead the service; in the main, the minister will *be* the service.

It is not the purpose here to discuss whether such a service is wisest. Each church must determine in the light of its own circumstances. What was said in the last chapter has its bearing, to be sure. But if the midweek service is to be a prayer-meeting, then it should be the people's meeting. The voices of the people should predominate. But should not the minister lead, even though the members participate? I think some strong reasons can be given for lay leadership.

1. It will be admitted, even by many ministers, that there is a possibility of having "too much minister" in what should be the people's service. There is danger that it will be a weak, half-tone reproduction of the Sunday services; too stiff and formal, smacking too strongly of the minister's library and homiletic magazine; not

human enough. Dr. Gray, of *The Interior*, was wont to say, in his waggish way, that three ministers were enough to kill a prayer-meeting. He did not mean that they would talk it to death; most ministers have too much sense for that. But, given the finest sense of fitness, and the best of intentions, the average minister will be a minister, from force of habit, when he enters the church door. It is not a matter of too much talk, but of too much "ministerialishness," to coin a word that will need no further definition. Therefore, it is better, often, for another to lead the people's service.

2. There is no necessity that the minister should lead, in a far larger number of churches than one might at first think. Every vacation prayer-meeting brings to light some hitherto unsuspected lay talent for prayer-meeting leadership. Every such opportunity helps to make a new force in the church. The minister can do better work in developing leaders than he can in leading meetings. He is then a strategist, fitting men into subordinate positions, instead of trying to lead every regiment of the army himself; he is the man behind "the man behind the guns." The minister is the Oyama of his parish.

There are some occasions when the white plume of the chieftain should be seen in the van. There are the strategic meetings of the year that the minister should lead: the prayer-meet-

ing that opens the fall activities after the summer vacation, the prayer-meeting before the special evangelistic meetings, the prayer-meeting at a time when the whole community is deeply moved by some great affliction, or some momentous public event, and every mind is receptive and alert for prophetic leadership on broad lines.

These are the mountain-peaks on which the master of strategy watches the whole field. But the routine fighting can be done by the generals, and colonels, and captains who fill the valleys. That is their chance to grow into the next rank above them. Making leaders is greater than leading meetings.

Another gain is that, by putting others forward, the minister keeps his own personality fresh, and the edge of interest in his prayer-meeting leading unblunted, against such special opportunities as enable him to count for a regiment. The minister who keeps himself from becoming an "old song" in his prayer-meeting is a masterful leader.

But the most cheering view of the situation is this: the minister who would not always lead, is not always under the necessity of making leaders out of raw material, as the only alternative. The young people's society has been graduating hundreds of young men and women who are not afraid to lead prayer-meetings, and many of whom are admittedly a success in planning

bright, spiritual meetings. For the sake of conserving the training work of these societies, if for none of the other reasons that will be mentioned, the minister should use in the church prayer-meeting the material for leaders trained in his young people's society. If he lets it go to waste for lack of use, he is like the general who should refuse to use as officers the men whom the country had educated at West Point. One of the most promising solutions of the problems of the church prayer-meeting and of the young people, lies in the direction of linking the younger members with the advanced work of the church through use of them in the church prayer-meeting.

3. A third advantage of lay leadership is the variety that it will introduce into the prayer-meeting. Monotony means stagnation, and stagnation is death. A new leader means a new personality, variety, interest, life. Because God has made no two men in the same mold, there will be a certain new-sidedness and charm about a new leader, even though his leading be crude. Crude life is better than faultless death. I do not mean that mere novelty and variety are a substitute for spirituality; but people who are kept awake and alert by variety are more likely to respond to the Spirit, other things being equal, than people who have been chloroformed by polished but trite platitudes.

4. The use of laymen as leaders takes from

the platform end of the meeting the air—I almost said "taint"—of professionalism. A man who is not paid a salary to say a thing sometimes can say it with more force than if it comes from the lips of a professional. The prayer-meeting that smells too much of the seminary and lexicon is doomed. It must be "depulpitized" before it can be vitalized.

5. Lay leadership of the prayer-meeting helps to give outward expression to the spiritual gifts and inner life of the laymen. Most busy men have more spirituality than they are credited with. They need help from their minister to enable them to give outward expression to what they feel within. After the death of a young lawyer, a member of the Boston City Council, a collection of meditations that he had written was found in envelopes in his desk. They indicated a depth of religious sentiment that his most intimate friends had not suspected in him. Men of that class might be greatly developed in the outward expression of their lives by being made responsible for the conduct of the church prayer-meeting. There are hundreds of men in the churches;—college graduates, trained in debating societies, members of clubs, accustomed to standing on their feet and speaking about other subjects, who could, with proper opportunities and persuasion, learn to stand on their feet and talk for Christ.

6. Finally, it may be suggested that this is preëminently the age of laymen's prominence in the church. Not a month passes without an announcement that some layman has been chosen for some church work heretofore reserved exclusively for ministers: it may be secretary of a missionary board, theological professor or lecturer, pastor's assistant, field secretary of young people's work, or evangelist. Lay talent is recognized in every other department of church work more than it is in the prayer-meeting, the layman's service, where you would expect to find lay leadership most advanced.

The minister has kept his finger on the prayer-meeting more closely than on any other service, except preaching, often just because he did not see a way to let go. But the bold contrast between the paucity of lay leadership here, and the frequency of it everywhere else, forces us to believe that the prayer-meeting must be the next field in which lay talent will become conspicuous.

I close this chapter with this saving clause, to avoid the charge of being radical and impractical: often there seems no alternative but for the minister to keep on leading the church prayer-meeting; but what seems to be true is not always true; the aim of this book is to help ministers to answer satisfactorily the question, "Is there a better way than for me to lead the prayer-meeting? If so, what is it?"

III

WHEN THE MINISTER LEADS

Often the minister must lead the prayer-meeting because there is no one else in sight. How may he put new life into the old meeting? Many a minister is asking himself this question as he wends his way to his meeting, week after week.

I hope no minister will deem this a Judas-like thrust, coming from a brother minister. The writer has been longer in the pew than in the pulpit, and therefore may help his brother minister to see himself as the layman sees him—a valuable service—still he is a minister, and stands with the "cloth" against all senseless class criticism. It is in a spirit of loyalty to his brethren that he suggests: When the minister leads the meeting let him leave his pulpit manner in the study and turn the key on it. Many a minister believes that there is gain in discarding, when he goes to the prayer-meeting, the full clerical garb that he wears into the pulpit; but he cannot so easily discard his pulpit tone and manner. One of the most obvious needs of the minister-led prayer-meeting is to be "depulpitized."

What is meant by that? A certain minister reads manuscript sermons on Sunday, to large con-

gregations. On Wednesday evening he speaks to a handful, from notes slipped into his Bible, but he speaks in precisely the same tone that he uses on Sunday, and as much of it. The unnecessary volume, and the oratorical delivery are so much out of place in the smaller room and in the more informal meeting that they give an air of unreality. A man who goes to the prayer-meetings remarked, "He seems a thousand miles away from me and the little fret that I brought with me. I could almost fancy he was speaking to some man on Mars, rather than to myself."

Of many an expiring prayer-meeting it might be said, "Killed by too much Sundayishness." The minister's talk was not only in pulpit tones, but homiletic and stilted in style. Perhaps it dealt more largely with the Jews, two or three thousand years ago, than with the affairs of Jonesville, in the year of our Lord 1906. A prayer-meeting talk that sounds as if it might have been cut off either end of the sermon will help to put no new life in the old meeting. On the other hand, no one would want his minister to be flippant. He would not have him come to the prayer-meeting wearing a golf suit. He would not wish him to speak with his hands in his trousers' pockets, or utter spiritual truths in the same jovial tone in which he would tell a good story at a banquet.

But the prayer-meeting should be a very hu-

man meeting—that is the pith of this plea. Here are human beings, with human infirmities and yearnings, just from a human atmosphere, seeking divine compassion and help in their human frailty. It makes all the difference in the world whether the leader puts himself alongside them, as a brother who understands their week-day life, and yearns with human pity to point them to One who can help, or whether he forgets the humanness of the situation, and elevates himself on his theological or philosophical stilts, away above his people. The trouble with some minister-led prayer-meetings is that the minister's vocabulary, the trend of his thinking, are a story or two above the pews in which the people sit, and no elevator is running. The nomenclature of the latest scientific or critical book that the minister has read has about as helpful a place in the average prayer-meeting as an elephant in a robin's nest. It is just about as difficult for a plain man or woman to speak or pray freely or naturally after the minister has illustrated his remarks by allusions to Haeckel's agnosticism, or the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, as it would for a boy to mount the platform after one of Russell Conwell's brilliant orations, and recite "Little drops of water, little grains of sand."

The prayer with which the minister leads the prayer-meeting is often the unconscious executioner of all the unborn prayers that were spring-

ing from the hearts of the worshippers. It is pitched so high, in its phrasing and in its allusions to current theological thought, that it disparages and smothers the simple prayer that Sister Smith had on her lips. Some clerical prayers slay the prayer impulses in the hearts of the members like a nipping frost among the flower beds. The minister is prone to forget that his hearers have not been reading the books whence his vocabulary is largely drawn. He is thinking with the editors, the scholars, the ministers' association; he does not get down close enough beside his people to remember that the great burden on the heart of one woman in that meeting is not whether the higher critics or the lower critics come out on top, but whether the measles come out well on Johnny, or whether the rash strikes in and kills him. In his lofty flights of civic fervour he may ignore the possibility that one man may have come to pray, not that the political rascals in New York or Chicago may be overthrown, but that his note that is due in bank at twelve to-morrow, and to meet which he has not enough money in sight, may be taken care of in some way.

The vital issue in most minister-led prayer-meetings, especially if the minister be scholarly, bookish, idealistic, is, Will the leader remember to be human? Will he, by his utter simplicity and naturalness and keen simpathy, as a man

among erring, troubled men and women, put into that meeting the simplicity and sense of reality that will make it the largest possible blessing?

Utter simplicity; common, every-day words are at a premium. Cant from the latest book is no better than cant from the Salvation Army barracks. If most of us could husk off all the religious phrases that the working man and the mother do not have in common with us, we should be better fitted to lead them in their devotions. Every phrase unfamiliar to the speech of our hearers tends to make our prayer vague and meaningless to them. The less of the minister, and the more of the man and brother, the closer the shepherd keeps to his foot-sore and weary sheep. If only the minister will remember that he *is* the shepherd, not the watch-dog, nor the expert on blooded merinos, his sheep will grow fat and strong.

IV

THE MOTIVE FOR LAY LEADING

WHY should not a lay man or woman who is asked to lead a prayer-meeting be as glad of the chance as he would be to lead his ward in politics, or she would be to lead in the social circle? It is a chance to *lead!* Most people covet it, in other affairs.

1. Timidity may make some shrink from it. We ought to sympathize with and make excuses for people who are naturally timid and nervous; but is it kindness to encourage them to remain painfully diffident all their lives? If their nervousness about prominence in the prayer-meeting is like the sprained ankle that gets better on Saturday afternoon when it is time for the baseball game, and worse Sunday morning when it is time for church, ought not we to help them to look in the glass at themselves?

A timid person has two reasons for consenting to lead a meeting, where a naturally confident person has but one: it is not only doing a service for others, but it is doing a service for himself; it is a chance to overcome his timidity—an obstacle to success and happiness in everything. A

timid person who is likely to be let off easily because of his timidity, ought to wear this placard to warn mistaken friends:

PLEASE DON'T BABY ME!

Young people are required to declaim in school, not because they can declaim so well, but because they do it so poorly. Ladies join Browning clubs, not because they can write such learned papers about Browning, and read them so gracefully, but because they know so little, and can perform so indifferently, that they feel they really must improve. Young men go into society, not because they can shine there, but because they want to rub off their awkwardness by cultivating the social graces at every opportunity.

So, when persons are asked to lead a prayer-meeting, who have never done so before, the fact that they have no experience and confidence only accentuates the need of beginning at once. The beginning may be hard, but he who is always shunning the hard things and picking out the easy ones will not succeed. The American spirit is to tackle hard things. Our contractors build bridges for Africa that the contractors of other nationalities declared were impossible within the time limits set. Our locomotive builders fill orders for India and Japan under the same conditions. Our military and sanitary officers under-

take to capture impossible positions and clean up yellow fever germs. Our engineers are glad to assume the tasks of chaining the Mississippi, harnessing Niagara, irrigating the desert, or digging big ditches from ocean to ocean. Our schoolteachers flock to Cuba and the wilds of the Philippines. None of these blanch because the job is hard. That is not the American spirit. Why should we not take this American spirit, of which we are so proud, into our religious life? Why should we shrink from doing a thing for Christ simply because it is hard? One of the best motives with which to ply the layman who is wanted to lead the prayer-meeting is, "It will do you good to undertake something new and hard, and it will glorify your Master more than if it were something easy.

2. "I am not good enough to lead," is another excuse often given. Sometimes this plea represents real modesty: sometimes a worldly fear of being thought priggish. This is the test: If we really feel that we are not good enough, we shall want to become better as quickly as possible; and the surest way to become better is to take up the duty nearest at hand. Declining duty until we are better, is like staying away from the water until one has learned to swim. One who does not feel good enough, makes a far better leader than one who feels himself plenty good enough, with a margin to spare. Taking up the

duty will be a new committal to Christ, and that in itself will make one better. The unfaithful soldier may redeem himself by seeking the post of danger. The only final argument is, "I am not good enough to lead, and I do not mean to try to become any better."

The Christian who shrinks from leading the prayer-meeting because he fears it may make him look like a prig, would never think of applying such reasoning to anything else. He would not decline a promotion to be head clerk or foreman, for fear he might be thought a prig. She would not ask that her name be not mentioned in the society paper, as a leader, for fear of being thought a prig. Consistency must condemn a fear of priggishness that applies to leadership in one thing, only, and not in other similar things.

3. There are a great many positive reasons why one ought to be as glad of a chance to lead in spiritual things as he is to lead in social and business affairs.

(1) It is an opportunity to pass blessings on to others. If some philanthropist should wire us, "I will remit $1,000 for the poor of your town if you will distribute it," who of us would not be glad of such a privilege? Leading a prayer-meeting puts one in just that relation to God and the people led—the leader becomes, in a sense, the distributor of the blessing God can give that meeting. If he succeeds as a leader, every

one is inspired and helped. The eclat of doing a thing well is contagious, and because that duty was done happily, every duty becomes easier, for every one present.

(2) But if the leader fails, and stammers, and shows inexperience, every timid person present is encouraged to feel, "I could do as well as that myself." Bishop Simpson tells how, when a young man, he was about to give up the ministry in discouragement, when an old minister came to preach for him who did so much worse than he that he was encouraged to stick.

The poorest leader, in point of fluency and self-confidence, often has the best meeting, because every one sympathizes with him and tries to help him out. Some of the worst failures as leaders have been those who spoke so well that every one else kept still through sheer intimidation.

In the Christian Endeavour prayer-meetings held in the headquarters of the United Society, Tremont Temple, Boston, Dr. Francis E. Clark has been heard, often, to thank the office boy, or one of the stenographers, who led the meeting, for some thought that helped him. The weakest and youngest may bring help to the most mature Christians.

Bishop Lawrence, describing how tired, troubled mothers go to church and come home with new patience to bear with the willfulness of their children; how business men who have

grown cynical and sordid get a fresh view of life, and come away seeing how faithfulness in their every-day duties helps to make the world better, exclaims, "Give that experience every week to all of the men of this city, for five minutes only, and think of the enormous inspiration that would be felt!" And those minutes may be the very ones in which you are trying to pass on to others the comfort and cheer that came to you in your study of the Bible message!

(3) A final reason for being glad of an opportunity to perform such a service is that it must please Christ. His way of helping men, when He was on earth, was through leaders. He chose twelve men, no better than their fellows, to be leaders. Suppose Peter had said, "I am not good enough"? Suppose Nathanael had been afraid of being thought a prig? Again, He sent out seventy leaders. Read again of the blessings that came through these. All through the history of the church Christ has been using leaders, in little circles, to be channels of blessing to those circles. That is still His plan. You are not asked to lead to please your pastor, or the church, or prayer-meeting committee, but to please Christ.

If the President of the United States were to ask you to give him the hospitality of your home for a day, while he was in your city distributing honours and rewards to brave soldiers, how honoured you would feel! How you would pre-

serve the chair in which he sat, and the table on which the medals were laid. Jesus Christ asks lay men and women to let Him use their voices, their minds, their personalities for an hour, that He may through them distribute inspiration and cheer and blessing to others. Could we grant the one request and deny the other?

But the President, actually coming to your town, and standing in your parlour—that would be so different; so real!

But Jesus Christ is to be actually in your meeting. He has promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in their midst." Isn't that real? Our King wants to use our leadership as the president would use our room, our table.

But the most stupendous thought that can come to one who hesitates to execute such a commission is the realization, "You can never tell what wonderful things God is going to do with that which we allow Him to use." The boy gave Jesus the five small barley loaves and the two little fishes, but see what they became in His hands! He can do as much, and more, with you, if you let Him. Florence Nightingale said, "If I could give you any information of my life, it would be to show how a woman of very ordinary ability has been led by God in strange and unaccustomed paths, to do in His service *what He has done in her.* And if I could tell

you all, you would see how God has done all, and I have done nothing. I have worked hard, very hard; that is all, and I *have never refused God anything*."

Because we can never tell how much splendid history may be wrapped up in the smallest service God asks, we dare not refuse it. One tract handed out by a woman brought the late Dr. George C. Lorimer to Christ, and he led Russell H. Conwell.

As great things, and greater, lie in the lay leadership of the church prayer-meeting. One of the most urgent calls of the times is for more such leadership, and we believe that lay men and women will respond to this call.

V

HIDING BEHIND THE MESSAGE

THE comforting thought for every timid leader of a prayer-meeting, whether of the adult membership of the church or the young people, is, "Though I am a weak leader I have a mighty message. I am only the messenger. People may despise the messenger, but they will respect the message, and be glad for it."

Yet the messenger, too, is important; on his faithfulness hangs everything. If the postman neglects to deliver your letter to-day, you may be gone to-morrow. The faithfulness of the messenger is the only thing in him that we criticise. You don't mind that the messenger boy uses false syntax, so that he brings promptly the telegram from your sick one. The importance of the message overshadows everything else.

The leader of either of the church prayer-meetings may always have a message so important that it will command respect, no matter how poor an opinion the messenger may have of himself. Are we declining to lead because we lack faith in ourselves? Have we faith in the word of God and its power over the lives of men? That is the real question.

Dr. Willis C. Noble, of China, says that no mission has ever failed, even though the missionaries have been driven away, if they left the Bible with a people that could read it. Two Turks recently came to a missionary in Armenia, professing Christ. They had never been taught Christianity by a living teacher, but had found a Bible among the plunder they had stolen from an Armenian village, and had read the Book, and been convicted of sin and led into the Way. Instances like this might be multiplied many hundredfold.

So powerful may be the message, that the weakest lay leader may hide his own personality behind it. A hunchback dwarf, because of the sovereign he represents, is honoured as the ambassador of a mighty king. No man or woman who happens to be leader is the central figure in the prayer-meeting, but the glorious Christ to whom the leader calls attention. Let us glance at some reasons why we should keep in mind the fact that the prayer-meeting message, and not the messenger or leader, is the important thing:

1. Self-consciousness is one of the worst weaknesses with which a Christian has to contend. It keeps him thinking about himself when he should be thinking about his message. Usually, painful self-consciousness is a compound of egotism and nervous sensitiveness. The adversary uses it to silence testimony or prayer. He whispers, "Per-

haps some one will notice the fit of your clothes while you are standing," or, "Your voice is not in good form," or, "Are you sure that all your verbs and nominatives agree?" In a young people's meeting a leader was so tortured by self-consciousness that he found himself wishing through it all that his cuffs were an inch shorter, and he never desisted from trying to push them up.

Such self-consciousness is a success-killer in anything. It is one of the greatest social torments. A young girl wrote "Pansy," telling her how frightened and awkward she was in social gatherings. The answer was, "Next time you are in company watch the most self-possessed person in the room, and you will discover that she is not thinking of herself, but how to put others at their ease; finding something for that bashful young man to do, or drawing out that shrinking wall-flower."

That is the secret of curing the self-consciousness that has given many of us wretched half hours; and cure it we must if we would be our best in the social, business, and political worlds, as well as in the church. The cure is, in the prayer-meeting, simply to remember that we are there for service, and not for show; that we have a message that will cheer and comfort others; that the glad and glorious gospel of Christ always awakens responses in human hearts.

It will help us always to think of the prayer-meeting as a school of prayer, and not an exhibition of finished performances. If we approach it with the request of the disciples on our lips, "Lord, *teach* us to pray," there will be less shrinking from taking part, for not much is expected of learners.

2. It should be an inspiring thought to a lay leader that he does not stand alone in holding forth the message for the evening. The prayer-meeting topic used in his church may be used also by every other church in his denomination. The topics that guide the prayers and testimonies of the young people's prayer-meeting have been selected by a committee of churchmen prominent in more than one continent—editors, bishops, college presidents, and leading ministers and laymen—and every detail, even to the exact wording of the topic, has been carefully and prayerfully studied. When the leader of the young people's meeting arises to take charge of the meeting, he may remember that more than sixty thousand other leaders will hold forth the same message. There should come to leaders of both the church prayer-meetings a wonderful inspiration and stimulus from this sense of being in unison with a great movement.

Each leader may think, "I am the captain of one company in a great army. I must lead my company well. The Great Captain is looking

on. He shall not see me falter." Napoleon said that his battles were won by his captains. No Christian denomination is mounting to heights of spiritual victories to-day higher than its prayer-meeting captains are planting the standards of spiritual devotions.

3. Every leader may assure himself, "Some one in the meeting will need my message. If you can be sure that God has given you a message, you may be just as sure that He has sent some one hungry to get that message. You may not see the hungry one; you may never know that any one was helped, but some one will be passing through a crisis, and your message will be just the message needed. I recall how one Sunday I omitted the usual word of prayer in opening my Friendly class, for those passing through trials or in special need of divine help. Every one looked so happy, and I was in a hurry, and so I cut the prayer out. Afterwards I learned to my sorrow that two of my pupils were heavy-hearted because they had just committed a relative to an asylum. You will never know, until the day on which all secrets are revealed, what a comfort your poor leading of the prayer-meeting, or your participation in it, has been to some aching heart.

The above has been written in the hope that it may encourage some to consent to make their activities felt in this neglected ministry, lay

leadership in the prayer-meetings of the church, particularly the meetings for adult members. I believe there awaits a great blessing for the church when its business men, its secular teachers, its writers and public speakers, its professional men, its gifted women, and its members rich in a knowledge of the Word, and taught of the Spirit, whatever their culture or social positions, shall be willing to lay their varied gifts on the altar of this service, and make it what the church prayer-meeting was intended to be, a people's praise and prayer service.

VI

DUMMY LEADERS, AND REAL LEADERS

Assuming that some are willing to attempt lay leadership of the prayer-meetings, particularly that of the older membership of the church, the quality of such leadership becomes an important problem. The quality will depend upon the ideals which one has of leadership. A man whose ideals as a merchant are met by selling peanuts by the pint will never become a Wanamaker or Marshall Field. It is so with leading the prayer-meeting. If one is satisfied with merely sitting before a company of people, with reading an extract from the church paper, with saying, "Let us sing So-and-so, and So-and-so," and finally announcing, "The meeting is now open for all who wish to take part," when in reality it is closed tight and padlocked, and with watching the clock for the proper tick at which to join in the doxology and benediction, he is no more a real leader of a prayer-meeting than the tin soldier that the child places at the head of his play soldiers is a real general.

The real leader of the prayer-meeting, whether for young people or older ones, will have something of the same grasp upon the details and the

course of the meeting that makes the military strategist the master of the battle-field. Or, if you prefer to use a more peaceful figure, he must have something of the qualities that make the man who swings the baton the leader of the chorus.

1. The leader will strike the right key-note. If he does not, some one else will strike the wrong note, and so the whole meeting will be pitched upon the wrong key. Or, if the leader himself strike a lower key than he should, those that follow will likely follow in that minor key. For example, if he opens the meeting in an apologetic tone, when he should have sounded a triumphant note, or if he begins in a fault-finding tone when he should have spoken praise, or if he is flippant or indifferent when he should be reverent or on fire with enthusiasm, in any of these cases the leader strikes another note than that which should be the key-note of the meeting, and proves his incompetency to lead: the meeting may drift like a derelict with him in the chair, but he is only a dummy leader.

2. The leader who really leads must go in advance of those whom he leads. He will be in advance in his study and preparation on the topic of the meeting. The stream does not rise higher than its fountain. True, a prayer-meeting may sometimes have enough thoughtful people in it to lift it above the level of the careless, un-

prepared leader; but it will not have been *led* to that level.

When it is held that a leader should have a broader, deeper knowledge of the subject than the average of those whom he leads, it is by no means implied that he is to tell in the meeting all that he knows on the topic—that would be the greatest misfortune. But just because it is a principle of pedagogics that no truth can be adequately taught without a great deal of truth in reserve that is not taught, so it is the fullness of the leader's reserve information that gives emphasis and sparkle to the little that he imparts. It is the pressure behind the faucet, the pressure of the full reservoir, that makes the delightful shower bath, and the cooling hose sprinkler. Nothing gives positiveness and influence to what a man says like the deep conviction that has come to him as a result of his study of a truth. A leader may come before the meeting an iceberg, expecting to be thawed out by the meeting, or he may come into it a furnace, giving off sparks and heat.

3. The real leader will not only strike the key-note, and go ahead of those whom he leads, but he will make them follow him. He will plan to secure the coöperation of those whom he leads, to draw them out, to make them make the meeting, instead of making it himself. His success as a leader depends not so much upon what

he pours into the meeting, as upon what he pulls out of it. It is one thing to be a sky-rocket and dazzle beholders with one's brilliancy and exhaustive knowledge: it is quite another thing to be a lantern and show people the way, and get them to go in it.

To get coöperation in a prayer-meeting there must be a wise plan. God has set us the example. Every leaf, every hair of our heads is a marvel of careful planning. The great successes of the world are planned. Go into a shovel factory, and you will find men who do nothing but experiment with different shapes, to ascertain which can be thrust most easily into a pile of sand; whether it needs to be broader at the top, or at the bottom; which is best for shovelling coal, which for iron ore, etc. When you buy a common shovel you do not see the brains that have been mixed with it, but they are there. A prayer-meeting is one of the implements of the kingdom of Christ. It needs brains mixed with it, as truly as a shovel does. It needs a plan. The dull prayer-meeting, which makes people feel as if they never wanted to go to another, has not been thought over; has not been prayed over; it has just happened to be.

The real test of a prayer-meeting leader's ability is his success in getting timid, backward people to take part in the meeting. Any one can be a leader of those so ready that they need

no leading. But, to paraphrase a familiar saying, "He is a benefactor who makes two prayers grow where one grew before." The ideal prayer-meeting is like the old New England church service, to which each one brought a candle, and the house was light in proportion to the number of attendants. Now, the work of the real leader is, not to be a blazing arc light himself, but to get all the tiny candles lighted. In a certain prayer-meeting the attendance numbered fifty-six. When the song-service was over, the announcements made, and the leader was done introducing the topic, there were exactly fifteen minutes of the hour left. The leader took five of the fifteen to urge those present to take part, which was quite unnecessary considering that there were but ten minutes for the fifty-five persons. How much better if that meeting had been planned so as to give the fifty-five at least forty-five minutes.

4. The leader should be sure that he is going to end his meeting right; that he is leading somewhere in particular. He ought to plan, not only how he is going to open his meeting, and how he is going to continue it, but where and how he is going to close it. He must aim at something definite, and leave a clear-cut impression growing logically out of the theme. Some meetings close like a ship disappearing into a fog-bank. The well-led meeting should

close like a ship entering the port for which it sailed, and making fast to the very pier which the captain had in mind from the beginning of the voyage.

To this end it is wise for the leader to reserve himself for a closing word. He should not exhaust his resources in the beginning. He should be ready to throw himself into the task of making strong that end of the meeting which should be stronger—the close. He may seize upon the remark of another and turn it into a forceful application. Perhaps the theme has been, "Service," and the leader gives a brief summary of some of the most forceful utterances, and urges those that have not committed themselves to some definite form of service in the church, to write a note to the pastor telling him of their willingness to take up some form of service, specifying the kind they prefer.

5. It scarcely need be added that the real prayer-meeting leader will himself be Spirit-led. No leader's plans should be so cut-and-dried as not to be flexible and obedient to the promptings of the Spirit that come after the leader has done his best to prepare. The Spirit will not supply the lack of our own brains and common sense; He will not help the lazy leader. But He will lead the alert, consecrated leader. He will not use the blunt or rusty tool, but give Him the polished steel and He will give the power to send it

home. The leader may have no scholastic training, no great fluency of speech, but if he is acquainted with the Spirit, and so obedient to the Spirit that He can speak through him, there will be a throb and a glow and a spiritual power in the meeting that will be remembered throughout the week.

VII

ON BEING FIT TO LEAD

THERE is an impression in some circles that only one with an absolutely flawless character should lead a prayer-meeting. There would be few prayer-meetings. Some imperfect mortals must lead meetings, and must lead them successfully, for most of us are imperfect, and there *are* successful prayer-meetings. The self-righteousness of the Pharisee is a worse element of weakness than the blundering impulsiveness of a Peter. The best that any of us can do is, like "Lovey Mary," to promise ourselves, "I must be what they think I am. I must keep working and trying until I am that."

The very fact of having assumed responsibility in the matter of lay leadership ought to make us do what the electrician does with his wires when he has some unusually important test to make. He looks over them carefully to see that none are corroded or oily, so as to interfere with taking the full current. And if he finds their conductivity weakened he scrapes the ends with his knife until the copper looks bright and new. Then he tightens the screws of the binding-posts, and when he brings a positive and a negative end

together he expects to see the sparks fly. There are sparks that inevitably fly from consecration of ourselves to some given task; to doing that task according to the very best that is in us, whether it be leading a prayer-meeting, or what-not. The heavier the sense of responsibility, the more likely we are to affect other lives. Those sometimes spoken of as being "naturally qualified" are not nearly so effective as those having a deep sense of disqualification, but willingness to seek to overcome it. There is much that is better than fluency of speech, in a leader; that may easily be a disqualification.

1. Consistency of life leads a meeting, when the lips are stammering and "speech unto edification" seems impossible. The very confidence that people have in your Christian character makes your standing in the place of a leader helpful to them as you cannot be ordinarily. I am not at all saying that the immaculate life leads—it does—but that evident sincerity of intentions is an element of leadership, even when one blunders, sometimes, and miserably fails in carrying all his good intentions into effect. I think there is more sympathy between an average audience and the leader who is human in blundering and erring, than there is between the average prayer-meeting audience and the leader who is a perfect paragon of propriety. Human nature is very human, in the prayer-meeting as

elsewhere, and you can touch more people with your finger-tips, standing on a common level with them, than you can touch with a ten-foot pole, perched on a pedestal of immaculate goodness away above them. Don't forget, then, the opportunity that is yours to help others, you who hesitate to lead the prayer-meeting when the minister asks you, because you think yourself unworthy.

2. Experience leads. I mean experience in the Christian life. There are those who have been in the Christian Way but a short time. They look up to you as one having much more experience than they. They know that you must have encountered and overcome the very difficulties that now confront them. You have sailed your bark past the rocks, and around the shoals, and through the dangerous channels that terrify them. They wonder how you have managed; how things look to you now. You may not be gifted in speech. They know that. They do not desire to hear an oration from you, but the inexperienced always value the outlook of the experienced. You may have no other qualification, but you have an experience that qualifies you to lead the devotions of others. God has given you that experience. He has a right to expect you to use it to help your fellow-travellers. If you are asked to lead a prayer-meeting, say, "My voice may tremble, and my sentences may

not be as felicitously framed as the minister's, but if there is anything in my Christian experience that would encourage younger Christians, I will try to use my experience for Him."

3. Earnestness leads. Sometimes one who lacks all other qualifications for leading, but who is "dead in earnest," on fire with conviction of the truth, may lead others helpfully just by his earnestness. I do not mean to commend religious hysteria. But healthful enthusiasm is contagious, and one who has the power of so impressing others with his profound conviction concerning truth—that the truth has utterly possessed his being and is swaying his actions—is a valuable leader though devoid of other gifts.

One may utter glittering generalities in the conventional manner in which a train-announcer in a railway station calls out the trains, the tone may bear marks of culture and the accent be in good form; but how different one utters a truth in which he is personally, intensely interested! Listen to the young girl announcing her engagement to her best friend, or the young man communicating to his relatives the fact that his salary has been increased $500 a year. The formal announcement causes your tympanum to vibrate; the enthusiastic utterance thrills your heart-strings. This earnestness, or enthusiasm for Christ, is a wonderful thing in the lead of a meeting. Enthusiasm without erudition is better than

erudition without enthusiasm. Often they go together, but enthusiasm alone is a splendid element of leadership, and the very fact that we have positive convictions regarding God's truth, that we feel our souls burning within us for righteousness, is proof that God wants us to set others on fire.

4. Spirituality leads. A spiritually-minded person is not a morbid, gloomy, impossible kind of a person. A great many think that they cannot be very spiritual because they are so cheerful and happy. They fancy that spirituality means being lofty and stern. Perhaps as good a definition of spirituality as any is found in Frances Willard's fine saying, "I used to think that I was a body, and had a soul to take care of; but I came to know later in life that I am a soul and have a body to care for." Paul said, "The fruit of the Spirit is joy." If a tree is known by its fruits, are not the sunny, sweet-tempered, sympathetic, cheerful people the spiritual people? One need not be a mystic to be spiritual. Every cheap optimist is not spiritual. An everlasting "holy" smirk on the face is not a credential of spirituality. But if I were picking prayer-meeting leaders for effectiveness, I should try to get the sunny, optimistic, winsome Christians to lead as often as possible, for cheerful spirituality is the only kind the world believes in.

These are four of the most conspicuous quali-

ties that *do* lead, whether or no they are harnessed to the prayer-meeting. More than any other four things, they give men and women influence and ability to mould the lives of others. If they lead *outside* the prayer-meeting, why not let them lead so much more effectively *in* it? I am making a plea for more lay men and women as leaders in our prayer-meetings, and I am trying to show that it does not require so large an endowment as many fancy it does to fit one to lead helpfully—any one of these four, in a moderate degree, with hard work, is fitness enough.

VIII

THE PRAYER-MEETING LEADER AND HIS BIBLE

The proper use of the Bible in leading a meeting, deserves most careful consideration. 1. The first thing to which a leader needs to give attention is a preparation of eye, thumbs and fingers. I mean that his eye should be so practiced in determining just where to find the Scripture references and hymns, and his hand so deft in turning rapidly to them, that there need be no embarrassing fumbling of the pages at the critical moment when all eyes are upon him. Every instant of blundering or halting on the part of the leader, in the opening of the meeting, is a confession of his lack of preparation, and to show that he has been caught unprepared, is to lose influence, and let the reins of leadership slip through his grasp. When the captain wavers, the rank and file lose confidence and *esprit de corps*.

It may seem that such a matter as turning promptly to the chapter and verse is a petty detail; but we shall all agree that upon attention to just such petty details the winning of great battles, the success of great business enterprises have often depended. In Christian work, we need to

remember that there is as much merit in taking pains as in suffering pains. The Holy Spirit will honour the painstaking of the leader who turns to the references again and again until he is familiar with their location in the Bible.

2. A preparation of the memory is the second task. The leader should be able to remember how the topic is worded, and what the references are without having to dive into his pockets, turn them inside out, while the audience is waiting for him to begin, he mumbling apologetically meanwhile, "Ah—our—um—topic to-night is—er—let me see; I'll fish the topic-card out of my pocket in a minute," as has been done in young people's meetings. The keen edge of expectancy, which is always whetted when a new leader stands before an audience, is blunted by such a halting performance. The captain who did not know the watchword, on the eve of battle, without referring to the army regulations, and getting out his eye-glasses—who follows such a leader to the cannon's mouth?

3. Next in order, in an ascending scale, is preparation of the tongue. This is particularly applicable to young leaders. The wise leader will accustom his tongue to the pronunciation of every word in the Scripture-reading. Otherwise he may trip on some tongue-twister and send a titter through the back row of seats where the ungodly sit. When his audience feels that he

might have done better than that, had he only taken the pains, confidence in him shrinks. A careless leader is a discounted leader. The Word of God should be handled with reverence, and vocal mutilation of it that might have been avoided by study, is an affront to God. To touch the Word with impious lips is as bad as for Uzzah to touch the ark with impious hands. If the leader cannot feel sure of pronouncing correctly every syllable, by once reading the passage aloud, let him read it twice, three times, twenty times until, as Hamlet adjured the players, he can speak the words, "trippingly on the tongue."

4. A preparation of the mind should follow this. The Bible portion should be read thoughtfully, analytically, with note-book in hand. The leader of a prayer-meeting should make as heavy a draft upon the gray matter in his brain-pan as he would for passing a civil service examination, or planning a business or social coup. If any activity in which we engage has a right to the fullest use of our brains, surely it is our service of God. If we can be bright anywhere under the sun, certainly we have no right to be dull and prosy in leading a prayer-meeting. If we tax our brains to satisfy the employer who pays our wages on Saturday night, or draws a check for us at the end of the month, how much more should we put our best thinking powers into this

service for Him who hath "redeemed us, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with His own precious blood!" Sir Joshua Reynolds when asked the secret of his paintings, replied that he mixed brains with his colours. That is what our prayer-meetings need—that we who are to lead shall mix our brains with our use of the Word of God; the whole brain is not too much to master the message for any meeting. The following outline plan for studying the Scripture to be used in the meeting may be helpful:

(1) A brief survey of the book in which the Scripture is found:—the author, his purpose in writing, the place and circumstances of his writing, those to whom the book was specially addressed and their need of it. All this may be found in a Bible dictionary, or in the back of an Oxford or International teacher's Bible, provided one has not time to get the information by studying the book itself. For example, suppose that the book be Ephesians. The Bible dictionary states that it is one of the epistles of Paul's imprisonment, written during his first captivity in Rome, to the church at Ephesus. In it the apostle expounds his ideal of the church.

(2) A study of the context from which the passage for the meeting is taken, that we may understand the particular phase of the larger subject that the writer is treating in it. To take the

bare text alone may mean to come before the meeting with a scrappy, superficial knowledge. Suppose that the fourth chapter of Ephesians be the one from which the prayer-meeting portion is taken; we find Paul exhorting the Church at Ephesus to walk as becomes a church whose ideal is so lofty.

(3) A very careful study of the passage, verse by verse. It may be a passage with which we think ourselves sufficiently familiar, but still there is need of studying it again. We may think that we have known its meaning from our childhood, but still we need to study it afresh with reference to this particular meeting. It will be a mistake to attempt to lead a meeting depending upon a general knowledge of the passage, provided there is any possible opportunity for giving it even ten minutes' fresh thought. The one who is to lead others' thought upon this passage needs to freshen his own thought. If he had written commentaries on Ephesians, still he would need to get himself interested anew in this particular passage, that he might interest others; that he might go before the meeting in a glow of enthusiasm over the truth. A prayer-meeting is like a dining-table; if those who provide the meals bring stale viands, appetites will wane; but bring the fresh view of the Word, talk about the "new" mercies of God, bring the living experiences, and people will come with a zest.

And when we make this fresh study of the Bible, let us remember that we are doing it for tired mothers who have not time to dig fresh things out of the Word, for discouraged toilers who have come hoping to get a new grip, and for many who have become rutted and shallow, and may never see the deeper things in the Word unless we uncover them. Therefore we must read again and again. Meanings that escape us on the first reading will dawn upon us at the second. The third reading will be richer than the second, and the fourth will bring out hidden treasures. Like the gold and diamonds, God does not let all His sweetest messages to us lie on the surface, but He hides them deep. A friend of mine had a clever dog named Jack. A neighbour had a dog who was too lazy to bury bones, but used to steal Jack's. After he had lost several, he hit upon a plan to thwart the lazy, thievish dog. He dug deep holes for his best bones, and then very shallow holes for some small, poor bones, and the lazy, thievish dog took the second-rate bones, rather than go to the trouble of digging deeper for the best.

Suppose that the particular passage for the meeting be Eph. 4 : 22–32. It should be studied with pencil and note-book. How many characteristics of the " old man " who is to be " put off " does Paul mention? You will find six :—falsehood, dishonesty, corrupt speech, grieving the

Spirit, bitterness, grudges. How many characteristics of the "new man" who is to be "put on" are named? Again there are six:—truth, industry, edifying speech, kindness, self-control, forgiveness. Are there words or phrases that you do not clearly understand; as, "your former manner," "renewed," "after God . . . created," "members one of another," and "neither give place to the devil." Use the marginal references; Rom. 12: 2 on "be renewed," Jas. 4: 7 on "giving place to the devil." If there is a phrase or word that is not clear after scripture has been used to explain scripture, look it up in a commentary.

Let me not give the impression that the prayer-meeting is to be a place for the critical study of the Bible, where the leader is to give an exhaustive and scholarly exposition. The prayer-meeting should be the *prayer-meeting*, and the leader is not a preacher or teacher, but the *leader*. But how can a captain lead his company unless he knows the orders of his commander? All this study of the scripture is to enable the leader to get a new grasp on the thought of God; it is to so fire his soul that he will be a torch, kindling others who come to the meeting cold.

It may seem that too difficult a programme has been laid down for the average lay leader of a prayer-meeting to carry out. It is not a programme but an ideal. It is an ideal that can be

realized by the faithful use of a few spare moments a day, for a week. The time that it takes to read about the baseball games every morning would give us a preparation on the prayer-meeting topic that would make our faces fairly shine in the meeting. The chief requisite is to be willing. The leader who takes himself and his task seriously, may so saturate himself with the message of God for the meeting that he will be a walking solution of it. When he has done that, he will be surprised at the disappearance of his shrinking nervousness, and at the calm self-confidence that comes in the place of it. Like a stammerer who has found a rich diamond, and is so eager to share the joy of his discovery with others that he forgets to stammer, the gospel-filled, Spirit-filled leader will forget to shrink and be embarrassed in the gladness of telling the "good tidings of great joy."

IX

MORE BIBLE AND LESS TOPIC

The Bible was given by God. The topics for our prayer-meetings were made by men. This is not to disparage the use of topics: they serve a useful purpose. Only when we take them out of their subordinate place and push them into prominence ahead of the Bible itself, do they work mischief. I have been in prayer-meetings, both for adults, and for young people—but oftener for the latter—that were "topicked to death."

How may we discern such danger; how avoid it? By noting the following principles:

1. A topic is a handle to God's message. It is merely a condensed statement of what is in the scripture passage selected for use in the meeting. It is a brief, handy summary—a sort of label stuck on the outside of the package, that we may divine at a glance what blessings for us are within. Now the contents of a package are always more valuable than the label. The message in a letter is worth more than the address on the envelope, however ornate the penmanship. So the message of God in the scripture passage is the main thing for the meeting, and the topic is of secondary importance.

The use of a topic is to lead the mind into the heart of the message by the shortest route. It is like the guide-board by the wayside that says, "This way to Boston." The traveller would make a great mistake were he to climb the post and sit on the guide-board, fancying that he had arrived at Boston, instead of continuing on his way as directed. Yet a similar mistake is sometimes made in regard to the relative importance of the topic, and the scripture passage on which the topic is based. In fact, the customary phrase, "Scripture reference on the topic," is misleading. The references are not *on* the topic; the topic is *on* the scripture reference. That is to say, the Bible message is the principal thing, and the wording of the topic the subordinate thing.

A concrete illustration is afforded by a topic once given for the young people's meeting, "Our Heavenly Home." Now, if the topic were the main thing, then the proper procedure for a leader would be to sit down and wrinkle his forehead and ask, "What have I ever heard or read about 'Our Heavenly Home'? What poetry has been written about it? What gems of thought can I find in the encyclopedia of quotations? Whose sermons can I quote?"

But if the Bible message about heaven is the main thing, and the topic merely a handle to that, then the first question of the leader would be, "What does God's word say about heaven?

What message has He given for this meeting through the fourteenth chapter of John, or the twenty-first chapter of Revelation?"

2. Some errors against which a leader needs to guard, that result in more topic and less Bible, are:

(1) Magnifying the topic and belittling the Word. The leader, for example, starts out with the announcement of his topic. He proceeds to talk about his topic. He wrestles with it, analyzes it, amplifies it, rings all the changes on it that he can conjure up, charges it front and rear. It is "topic, topic, topic!" from first to finish. The Bible message he reads once, perfunctorily, and then takes his departure from it to the realm of topic, never more to return.

(2) Spending undue effort on collecting accessories on the topic. Shakespeare, and Drummond, and Spurgeon, and Milton, and Meyer, and Moody, and other good men may be quoted profitably in a prayer-meeting as side-lights on the Word of God, but never to the exclusion of the Word of God. God's Word is the lamp; they are only reflectors. A hundred of the brightest reflectors are no substitute for a lamp. Literary quotations are not out of place in a prayer-meeting; but let us light the lamp before we hang up the reflectors.

A prayer-meeting with too much topic and not enough Bible is like a farm on which some one

should try to substitute moonlight for sunlight. Moonlight is good for skating, and drives, and walks, but for raising corn and wheat, and for all the vital processes of life moonlight would be a poor substitute for sunlight. Let us have the sunlight first in our prayer-meetings, and after we have got God's thought then it is time enough to have men's thoughts on God's thoughts. This is an age in which we are using too much peptonized spiritual food: too many of us are getting our knowledge of the Bible at second hand, through books of daily devotions, through Sunday-school lessons, and the "meditations" of others in published form. We need to get more of the Bible at first hands, and less of men's thoughts on God's thoughts; meditate ourselves, be devout without a model. There is too much of the canning factory in our modern religious life, and not enough of the garden and farm.

3. How may we put the Bible ahead of the topic?

(1) By having Bibles enough in the prayer-meeting room for every one present. It is a bad sign when there are in the hands of the attendants upon the prayer-meeting more copies of the church paper, or some other paper treating the topic, or more books with poems or other extracts marked for use in the meeting, than there are Bibles in the room. It is a splendid thing to

cultivate the habit of carrying one's own Bible to the prayer-meeting. One knows his own Bible better, and can turn to what he wants with much more readiness than if he is handling a strange Bible picked up in the pew. Elsewhere will be found a suggestion for a "My Own Bible" meeting, which will emphasize this advantage with singular force.

(2) The leader should have some plans that will call for the use of the Bible in the meeting by as many as possible. Suggestions are made on this head farther on, especially as to getting all to take part in reading the scripture on which the topic is based, and as to making scripture explain and enforce scripture by use of the marginal references, and by topically arranged Bible-readings.

The vital thing in the leader is to get as many as possible to feed on the Word of God. "Tell me what you eat and I'll tell you what you are," has its spiritual counterpart. No diet of pretty quotations from popular religious authors will make strong spiritual heart-beats come out of the prayer-meeting, if the Bread of Life is overlooked there. Mechanical Bible quotations are not much better than other mechanical things. "The letter killeth; the Spirit maketh alive."

X

HARNESSING THE HYMN-BOOK TO THE PRAYER-MEETING

I PASSED a wagon on a desperately muddy road. One horse, hitched in the shafts, was having a hard tug. Another harnessed horse was being led behind. I wondered why the driver did not hitch the second horse to the load.

The first horse, in relation to our prayer-meeting chariot, is the Bible, which we have just discussed. The second horse is the hymn-book. We wonder, sometimes, why our prayer-meetings drag. It is because the hymn-book has never been properly harnessed to them. The singing is doleful enough, weak enough, spiritless enough to spoil a good meeting. We need to study how to harness the hymn-book to the prayer-meeting.

1. A good meeting must have the element of praise. Religious life without praise is like a face without smiles. It is spiritual dishonesty. No one can be honest who receives divine favours without voicing thanksgiving to God. When we are continually beseeching God for blessings, in our prayer-meetings, and praising Him but little in return, we make the impression that we are serving a niggardly, hard Master, who seldom

gives His people anything for which to praise Him. It is a dishonest impression. Our prayer-meetings will be more joyous and attractive, people will flock to them in larger numbers, when we are honest with God in them, and praise Him as much as we supplicate Him. Song is the natural expression of gratitude. People may say that they are grateful to God for His blessings, but if the singing drags in the prayer-meeting, they have falsified. God can't bless a dishonest prayer-meeting.

Therefore every prayer-meeting should have this element of praise. The meeting may be opened with a praise service—let it be a genuine one. Song may be sandwiched all through ; the meeting may close with an outburst of praise. To be a well-balanced meeting it must have praise, and jubilant song is another word for praise. Harnessing the hymn-book to the prayer-meeting means,

2. The leader must plan praise into it. It will not do to trust to spontaneity or luck. The leader must study his hymn-book as well as his Bible. Several things must be anticipated:

(1) The tendency of Mrs. Malapropo to take advantage of any lack of readiness on the part of the leader, and propose " Hark from the tombs, a doleful sound," in a meeting devoted to " How I may count my Mercies," must be taken into account. Misfits provoke levity in a prayer-meet-

ing as well as anywhere else. The hymns should all be selected beforehand, and should suit the topic. A familiar hymn should not be used that has no relevancy.

(2) The hymns should suit the audience. Every one has experienced that awful sense of humiliation, after dragging halfway through a new and difficult piece of music, proposed by the leader because it suited the topic, only to have it die out in absolute, cold-blooded failure, that left a chill that would have iced a cold-storage plant. Nobody knew how to sing it. While it is bad policy to continue pounding the old hymns to death, a devotional meeting is not the place for choir practice.

(3) The wisest selection of hymns may be spoiled in the singing. We become so familiar with certain hymns that we sing them as mechanically as the phonograph repeats what has been sung into it. How may a leader help his audience to see anew the beauty and meaning of words they have become accustomed to using in a parrot-like way? Before singing a hymn he may give a brief historical sketch of its origin; as, for instance, how Mr. Ufford came to write, "Throw Out the Lifeline," after witnessing the thrilling rescue of drowning sailors by the life-savers, or similar instances. Or, he may ask the audience to read the first stanza with him thoughtfully before singing it; sometimes a hymn read

without singing at all, is a pleasant change from the usual routine, and stimulates to thoughtfulness.

Variety may be secured by having a stanza of a hymn sung by the male voices alone, and a second by the female voices, all joining in the chorus. The resourceful leader will introduce solos, duets, instrumental music, when they will heighten the effect of the gospel message. Sometimes the Junior choir may sing with fine effect in the church prayer-meeting, or the church choir may be asked to sing in the young people's meeting, or singers from the young people's society may sing in the church prayer-meeting.

This suggestion may not need to be seasoned with the reminder that special music in the prayer-meeting should never be announced as if it were a performance for the entertainment of those listening, or something thrown in to enliven things. That would be death to a devotional spirit. The leader may introduce the singer in such a way as to make all feel that his singing is a part of the devotions of the evening. The class of music that sounds like a performance, and that is so affectedly mouthed that the words cannot be understood, has no place in the prayer-meeting, if it has anywhere in the church. A cornet solo may be so skillfully set in the routine of worship as to seem a part of reverent worship.

One use of hymns to which all thoughtful

Christians must seriously object, is for "filling in pauses" between prayers. It is degrading the beautiful and dignified hymnology of Christendom to "fill chinks" with the grand old hymns that have blessed generations. It is perfectly admissible, of course, to sing a prayer when other vocal prayer lags.

(4) But when the hymn-book has been harnessed to the prayer-meeting, don't ride it to death. Some thoughtless leaders wear the edges of the book ragged in frantic efforts to keep the meeting "alive." If there is an instant's pause, they fancy that they must rush in with a hymn, or all will be lost. Some of the most helpful and impressive moments of a meeting may be the pauses. They are not necessarily time wasted. We Americans feel that we must be bustling about something, or else we are guilty of inexcusable inactivity. The Spirit works when we are silent. The old Quaker fashion of sitting in silence until the Spirit spoke might help to cure our religious fussiness. The silent moments are not wasted, if the leader quietly suggests meditation, silent prayer, or the soft whispering of some introspective song.

This suggestion may be ventured for the benefit of more inexperienced leaders of young people's meetings; the hymn-book may be harnessed to the prayer-meeting without running away with it. Volume of song is not spirituality. Lung-

power is not pentecostal power. Luther's battle hymn gives a legitimate occasion for "raising the rafters," but "Whisper to me, Lord Jesus," or "Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling," are often spoiled by boisterousness that seeks to put "life" into the meeting by putting a din into it. Neither need the hymns go at a gallop to prove that the hymn-book is harnessed to the prayer-meeting. A galvanized prayer-meeting is not necessarily a vitalized prayer-meeting. Rush, and dash, and speed are not spirituality. The leader in song who permits the singing to lag and drag and drowse, and the leader who gestures like a jumping-jack and slaps the book, and exclaims, "Now; altogether!" as though he were bossing a gang of roustabouts, are alike hindrances to true devotions.

Let me speak also of abbreviated hymns. The fashion of indiscriminately chopping off the heads of all hymns used, and throwing the bodies away, is a deplorable one. In so many young people's meetings one never hears more than the first two stanzas of a hymn. The completed thought of the writer is never expressed. I know numbers of young people who could repeat the first two stanzas of a score or more of hymns, but beyond that you might as well ask them to repeat the *Koran*. Better sing fewer hymns and sing some of them through.

(5) A word about opening and closing hymns.

It is poor policy to sing half a dozen hymns "while the friends are gathering"—hymns with no related thought, perhaps. It tires the people and leads to nothing. If it is done simply to "kill time," while the audience gathers, it belittles the use of song. I have known of a leader who, after singing a string of hymns in this way said, "Now we will *open* our meeting by singing No. 50." What was he doing before he "*opened*"? Has a man any business to use hymns so?

The opening hymns should lead to the central thought of the evening, and the closing piece should, if possible, be one to clinch the good impressions of the evening. More thought needs to be given to the selection of these than any others. The closing hymn should never be weak and inconclusive. It is well for the leader to have in mind several closing pieces that are in accord with his theme, and at the last moment use the one that seems best to fit.

The leader's goal should be, not the entertainment of his audience, but the spiritual quality of the music; its lasting, uplifting effects. He may tickle the ears of some by jingling trash. They may go away saying, "That was a lively meeting; the music had a swing to it!" but they may have stirred in them no deeper loyalty to Christ, no higher sentiments of gratitude to God, or devotion to the church. As Dr. Parks Cad-

man says, "Cheap hymns make a cheap meeting." On the other hand I would not go to the extreme of singing nothing but music that would meet classical tests. There are certain hymn-books so very artistic and dignified that you could not harness them to a service for the common people. You might as well expect an iceberg to splash and play as a fountain in your summer garden. John and Charles Wesley made the Methodist movement spread like wildfire by giving the multitudes popular religious hymns. Many of those hymns, condemned at first according to the canons of correct religious music, live to-day, and will live forever.

The hymn-book is harnessed to the prayer-meeting when the hymns accentuate the message of the evening, and when they are so singable and yet so pervasive of spiritual influences that they take hold upon the spiritual susceptibilities of men and women, and nerve them to take up life's duties with renewed courage. If what has been said impresses the need of careful thinking and planning in regard to the selection of hymns for the prayer-meeting, and their proper use in the meeting, just the point will have been made that was intended—if we used our wits more in planning the music of the prayer-meeting, we should not so often have dull, lethargic, uninviting meetings.

XI

MORE PRAYER IN THE PRAYER-MEETING

THE genuine prayer-meeting will not subordinate prayer, as its principal element, for essays on religious topics, for symposiums on popular amusements or the Sunday newspaper, for lectures, for song-services, or for anything else. It will seek to be true to its name—a *prayer-meeting*. It would be as rational to try to substitute something else for flour in making bread, as to seek to substitute something else for prayer in the prayer-meeting. It is a fine thing to have a warm social atmosphere before and after the meeting, in which warm handshakes and cordial greetings predominate. It is inspiring to have animated, spiritual singing, and much of it. It is refreshing to hear some strong, clear testimonies; but, given all of these, and much more that is good, without considerable strong, earnest prayer, the prayer-meeting is the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out.

No amount of good talking can make a good prayer-meeting. The impression prevails in some quarters that little homilies, pious exhortations, interesting anecdotes with a religious bearing, and well-selected quotations from popular religious writers are of equal value with prayer in a

prayer-meeting. This cannot be true. In the former case we are talking among ourselves. It may be very edifying and helpful; but in the latter instance we are doing business directly with God. An ounce of believing prayer is worth a ton of edifying talk, if the Scriptures are good authority. To be sure, no prayer-meeting leader should object to a personal testimony, or to any contribution calculated to edify, but at the same time there is great need, in the average prayer-meeting, of developing the volume of prayer. How may this be done?

1. By helping the people to understand what prayer is. There may be a great deal of prayer in the meeting that does not go by the name of prayer. There may be much that goes by the name of prayer that is not broad, symmetrical, Scriptural prayer. It may be helpful, here, to analyze prayer into some of its constituent elements; for example, as Mr. Moody did:—

(1) Adoration. We cannot meet God on our own level. We must approach Him as One far above us.

(2) Confession. Sin must be put out of the way. There can be no communion with God while there is transgression between us.

(3) Restitution. We must make right the wrong, as far as is possible.

(4) Thanksgiving. If God has been blessing us and we keep still, that is denying Him.

(5) Forgiveness. We must forgive in order to be forgiven.

(6) Unity. Believers must be agreed touching the things they ask.

(7) Faith. We must ask expecting to get the things for which we ask.

(8) Petition. There is no prayer without asking, though all asking is not prayer.

(9) Submission. The "Thy will be done" spirit characterizes true prayer.

All of these elements need not be in every prayer, but all of them must be in the praying of the church, and in whatever way any of these are expressed in the prayer-meeting, that is a part of the praying of the prayer-meeting. Taking this broad view of it, the remark with which the second paragraph of this chapter closes might seem to need qualifying. It does in this way—no one can tell how much prayer there is in a prayer-meeting simply by counting the prayers; there may be praise, adoration, confession, submission, even petition, otherwise expressed, in song, speech, even looks.

2. But what are some of the ways by which the volume of prayer may be increased?

(1) By the use of the Bible. It is the best book of prayer. The greatest prayers are recorded here. Such prayers as those of Moses (Ps. 90), David (Ps. 51), Solomon (1 Kings 8), Paul (Eph. 3:14–21), and Jesus (Matt. 5 and

John 17), are not only models of prayer, but incentives to prayer. When the element of prayer seems to be deficient, nothing could better supply the lack than reading together some of these, or other Bible prayers. The reading might be prefaced with the suggestion that each one joining in the reading try to make this prayer his or her prayer.

(2) Praying through song is another way of increasing the volume of prayer. There are, scattered through the hymnal, songs containing all the constituent elements of prayer specified above. If, therefore, audible prayer lags, the leader may suggest the singing of a hymn as a prayer. The singing of "Holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," is well calculated to awaken feelings of adoration and reverence. "Hear us, O Father, while we pray," will call for a humble, supplicating spirit. In no way could a leader more effectually prepare himself than by going through the hymnal and checking off the hymns that are prayers.

(3) The use of the Psalms of praise is another way of introducing, indirectly, one element of prayer—praise. A word or two, calling attention to the thankful tone pervading the psalm, and then the audience may read it together as their expression of thanksgiving to God for His goodness. It may surprise some to hear that such an exercise should be called prayer, because the majority of us have been accustomed to think

only of petition as prayer; yet thanksgiving for what God has given is just as truly prayer, as asking Him for what we want Him to give us.

(4) A place in the meeting for requests for prayer is a capital way to encourage definite, practical prayer. A box may be fastened to the wall of the room to receive such requests, which may be anonymous, and frequent attention may be called to it. Or, if this is to be only an occasional, and not a regular feature, the ushers or others may pass slips of paper, and, after the requests have been written, gather them up again for the leader. Such an exercise not only stimulates more prayer, but it turns the current of thought in the meeting away from self to others. It is a healthy practice, because a self-centred prayer-meeting is always a morbid prayer-meeting.

Should the audience be backward about presenting requests for prayer, the leader may write upon the blackboard a list of objects for which he would like to have prayer offered. It might include:

Please Pray for

Our pastor.
Mrs. Jones who is in the hospital.
Our Sunday-school officers and teachers.
The family whose house was burned to-day.
Our Junior society.

This list is susceptible of a great deal of variation. Just think how many good causes in which you are interested, are never mentioned in your church or young people's prayer-meeting:—the public schools, the Salvation Army, the aged people's homes, the hospitals, the W. C. T. U., the men in our army and navy, the policemen, the firemen, the life-savers, etc. There is really no lack of something to pray about, things in which people are really interested, but the church members and young people need leaders who will lead their thoughts to these objects.

(5) Silent prayer is another resource of which not enough is made in the prayer-meeting. With many it has this advantage over audible prayer, that the effort to pray audibly distracts the mind from real communion with God. People shut their eyes at the telephone that they may have the sense of hearing more acute, and on the same principle, silent prayer, with bowed heads, and a hush upon the room, is a very valuable exercise. A season of silent prayer should be prolonged enough that the mind may have time to fix itself upon some definite subject. The average leader who makes use of silent prayer, makes the mistake of cutting the period so short that the purpose is thwarted by precipitancy. He says, "Let us have a moment of silent prayer," and almost as soon as people have bowed their heads he breaks out in audible prayer. A mo-

ment in silence, with the clock ticking loudly, is a much longer period than the leader is likely to wait, unless his attention has been called to this point. It would be better for the leader to hold his watch in his hand, or count sixty deliberately, before he gives the organist the signal to play softly some song whose strains will seem to take up the thought of the prayer and waft it heavenward.

XII

THE BLACKBOARD AND OBJECT-LESSONS IN THE PRAYER-MEETING

The human mind is a house with several doors. Sometimes the ear door seems to be locked. There is a spirit of inattention to what the leader is saying, and to what others are saying. It may be the vitiated atmosphere; it may be something else. But in such straits there is another door, and if the leader has a key to it he can get in with his message. Indeed, even if he has entrance through the ear, he may make his message more effective by using eye-teaching as an auxiliary. It gives him two chances of making his message effective, where he would have but one chance if he used only the ear entrance.

The subject-matter of this chapter may appeal more strongly to leaders of young people's meetings than to leaders of the midweek prayer-meeting, though I have known ministers to use the blackboard quite effectively in conducting the church prayer-meeting for adults. For missionary and other special meetings, the blackboard will be found effective, whatever the age of the audience. Therefore let us consider what? and how?

1. How to have a blackboard. Some prayer-

meeting rooms are provided with blackboards; many are not. In the latter case, a portable blackboard of slated canvas may be substituted. It has the advantage over a stationary blackboard that it may be rolled and carried under the arm. This admits of at least a part of the drawing being done at home, which is better for inexperienced users of crayon. When hung in the prayer-meeting room, it may be turned face to the wall, or covered with a sheet of paper until the leader is ready to have the blackboard work exposed; for to expose it to view from the beginning might sometimes prove distracting, and cause it to lose its effect.

A still cheaper substitute for a blackboard is a large sheet of white paper, such as may be had at any printing-office for a few cents. In the absence of this, ordinary wrapping-paper can be made to answer.

White chalk is best for use by artificial light, on a blackboard, and black crayon on a white surface or wrapping paper. The colored crayons show up poorly under lamplight. This may be said of the relative efficiency of the blackboard and the "whiteboard," a white line on a black surface can be seen more plainly than a black mark on a white surface. In case the drawing used is a map, or a chart, or anything that is likely to be used again, it is better to make it on cheap, starched muslin.

2. Who dare undertake blackboard work? It is not necessary that one be a finished artist, in the sense of being able to turn out artistic work. One need not be a Frank Beard, or a professional "chalk-talker" to print a few big, bold letters; and yet such a simple use of the blackboard as this may sometimes make a prayer-meeting topic twice as plain and interesting as it would be without the blackboard. The leader who lacks confidence in his ability even to print "big, bold letters," may do it by proxy—he may find some one who can do just this one thing to the glory of God and the edification of the church, but who cannot be induced to take any other part in the meeting.

3. What shall be put on the blackboard? (1) The topic and such divisions of it as will suggest lines of prayer and remarks. For instance, suppose the topic is "Growing in Grace." Would not such an outline as the one below be suggestive:

Why do I Need to What Means Will Help me to How Plant Life Teaches me to What Scripture Passages Encourage me to	Grow in Grace?

(2) Questions on the topic may be put on the blackboard. For instance, on the topic, "Men of the Bible who Failed," the following questions might stimulate prayer and discussion:

What was the secret of Cain's failure and how may I profit by it?

What weakness in Samson made him fail, and what is its modern significance?

How may we avoid good Eli's one bad trait?

What flaw in Saul's character characterizes modern society?

We must not make the mistake of thinking that these questions are to be asked and answered in the meeting. The prayer-meeting is no Bible class. They are placed before the eye simply for their suggestiveness. The leader may refer to them, or not, as he deems best.

(3) Teachings on the topic, or deductions from it, may be set forth on the blackboard. These are the salient points which the leader wishes to "stick." Take, for example, such a topic as "The Temperance Lessons of Benhadad's Defeat" (1 Kings 20). How much more practically the theme may be brought to bear upon modern temperance problems if such a set of conclusions as the following is flashed upon the audience just at the right time!

Drink made Benhadad unfit to lead; it makes unfit leaders to-day.

Drunkenness is a social evil—are we solving it as a social problem?

Drink unfitted the rank and file for service; it makes unprofitable employees to-day.

The young men of Israel saved the day; are we educating our young men to save society?

(4) Statistics and figures of any kind are more valuable if presented to the eye. Statistics of population, in connection with missionary topics, can best be presented by a large square, representing the total population of the country, divided into small squares, representing each a million, or whatever fraction of the whole is desirable. The squares representing the heathen part of the population may be coloured one shade, and those representing Christianity may be coloured another colour.

(5) The value of symbolical designs—hearts, crowns, anchors, etc., is problematical; with adults it is admittedly zero. But if one wishes to put designs of some artistic pretensions upon the blackboard, a very sure way to attain symmetry is to draw them from a pattern. For instance, stiff paper may be folded double and cut to represent one half a heart, an anchor, a shield, etc. When the paper is unfolded it will give a complete figure, both halves of which will be exactly alike. The pattern may be traced upon the blackboard in lines invisible to the

audience, and easily reproduced in heavier lines at the proper moment. This precaution prevents that askewness of figure which sometimes makes the drawing of amateur draughtsmen laughable.

To draw a perfect circle on the blackboard, all one needs is a bit of cord with a loop. Place the crayon in the loop; hold the other end of the cord with thumb and finger against the board; swing the crayon around with a taut cord, and you have half a circle. Change hands and complete it.

(6) Maps and charts might illuminate the prayer-meeting topics much oftener than they do. They are far more valuable than anagrams, acrostics, symbolical figures, and ornamental penmanship. People pray more fervently on a subject when they understand it more clearly. Every missionary prayer-meeting should have displayed before it a map of the country or field under consideration. In the young people's societies there are usually public-school pupils who have been taught map-drawing, and whom it will do good to use their skill in making an outline map. In most adult prayer-meetings there is a public-school teacher who could draw such a map. A very crude outline will suffice; the fact that some one in the community has made it will give it value exceeding that of the most expensive map that could be bought. Dr. Josiah

Strong's book, "Religious Problems and Progress," has a number of charts valuable for use in missionary prayer-meetings.

Every temperance prayer-meeting will be the more effective for presenting, through a chart, some temperance facts to the eye. A great variety of temperance drawings may be used. The W. C. T. U. Publishing Department, the Prohibition Press, Chicago, possibly other temperance societies, have in stock charts showing the relative expenditures for bread, schools, missions, tobacco, drink. In states having a county local-option law, a map of the state will be effective, having the license counties coloured black and the no-license counties white. Temperance conditions in the wards of a city may be portrayed in the same way.

(*7*) Under "Miscellaneous ways of using the blackboard" the following might be noted:

(*a*) For posting the missionary prayer cycle in the young people's prayer-meeting.

(*b*) For making important announcements for Sunday or the next prayer-meeting.

(*c*) To place before the eye the Bible references on the topic, that are to be found and read in the meeting.

(*d*) To report, at the close, how many were present and took part, for comparison or encouragement.

(*e*) To announce the next week's topic.

If the user of the blackboard will remember that alliteration is not always elucidation, and that the blackboard is to be an accessory of worship, and not a distracting element, there is likely to be very little abuse by over-elaborated or fantastic designs. On the other hand, nothing that is not susceptible of abuse is susceptible of use. To make the blackboard a success will require a little effort—yes; but that is just what counts most in us—the willingness to undertake a thing though it looks hard. I have heard a great many pleased comments from those who have attended prayer-meetings in which some simple effort had been made to rivet the truth by the help of the blackboard. I am convinced that God never meant us to leave our eyes at home when we go to the prayer-meeting, and that if we take them along, we might as well use them, as to use our ears and our tongues.

(8) What is said under the head of object-lessons in the prayer-meetings may be thought more applicable to young people's or Junior prayer-meetings, but at a prayer-meeting of John Wanamaker's Brotherhood, fourteen hundred spools of thread were distributed at the door, just to emphasize and clinch a certain truth. At a certain prayer-meeting held in the tenement-house district of a city, a loaf of bread was given to every comer, the theme being, "Jesus, the Bread of Life." I recall leading a

meeting for the young people of Rev. Howard B. Grose, now the editorial secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, New York. The theme was "The Bible, a Light," and among other things there was shown an oriental foot-lamp which the pastor had picked up in his travels, and which illustrated the verse in the reference, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet," etc.

I should not hesitate to introduce the Underwood or White stereographs of Palestine into a prayer-meeting whenever they would illustrate the topic and help to a clearer and more reverential appreciation of the message.

On the same principle by which we use evergreens and holly berries as an accessory of worship at Christmas time, and accentuate our Thanksgiving devotions by bringing the sheaves of wheat, the yellow corn, the pumpkins, and the fruits into the sanctuary, and illustrate the grand resurrection truth by the lily and the potted plants within the altar rail, we may use a great many other objects of nature and of our every-day life to make more impressive and helpful our week-night and Sunday prayer-meetings. On patriotic occasions, the stars and stripes draping the Bible stand is an object-lesson. We all claim to believe that God moves in the affairs of our nation, yet how few churches, comparatively, own an American flag!

The Bible itself may be used as an object-les-

son. In a service the topic for which was, "How We Got Our English Bible," a miniature facsimile of the Book of the Law (a Hebrew roll) was shown; the chart in a book with the above title was reproduced on the blackboard, and from the teacher's Bibles in the hands of the audience, facsimiles of the Greek, the Latin, and Anglo-Saxon versions, and the oldest English translations were inspected, as the leader explained the successive steps by which our Bible had come to us as it is today. A great many went away from that prayer-meeting exclaiming, "Why, how plain it all is! I never knew that was the way our Bible came to us!"

XIII

HOW TO AVOID MONOTONOUS MEETINGS

The primary meaning of monotony is, using one tone. In a meeting, it is keeping in one rut. In some ways ruts are good. The gullet that carries the food from the mouth to the stomach is a rut—a " gully " that nature has provided for a good purpose. If but a small portion of the food gets out of this rut and into the windpipe, a fit of strangling is a very pertinent reminder that sometimes a rut is a good thing.

Some ruts are in place in the prayer-meeting. It is helpful, indeed necessary, to observe certain forms ; such as, having a set time at which to begin and close, having the audience seated, having the leader face the audience, and invariably having prayer. These things do not become monotonous in themselves. Vital functions never become monotonous—breathing, eating, heartbeats, sleeping. It is needless repetition in nonessential things that becomes tiresome. The audience needs be seated, always, but it need not always be seated in the same stiff, military precision. The leader must face the audience, but he need not always sit in the same part of the room. A prayer-meeting should always have prayer,

and song, and reading of the scripture, but the same prayers need not always be made by the same persons at every meeting, week after week; and the same precise order of song, scripture-reading, prayer, need not be observed unvaryingly. Tiresome monotony in a prayer-meeting is an indictment for thoughtlessness against those in charge of the meeting. It is an indication that no one is putting brains into the meeting. Let us notice some of the effects and cures of monotony.

1. Too much monotony makes a dull, tiresome meeting. People do not give attention to an exercise that is dull, and their interest corresponds to their attention. Variety and freshness, even in small things, give piquancy, and stimulate attention and interest. Monotony puts people to sleep. For example, rocking the cradle is another name for monotony. It is, "rock, rock, rock, rock"—always the same rhythmical, monotonous movement. And we sing, "Hush-a-by, hush-a-by, hush-a-by"—the same soothing, monotonous repetition, and of course the baby goes to sleep. Do we realize that monotony works the same way in a prayer-meeting? The same invariable order of things week after week—it matters not whether it is, pray, sing, read; or, read, sing, pray; or, sing, pray, read—and the same prayers by the same people, and the same songs sung in the same way, make a monotony

that tends to kill interest and put the meeting to sleep. Ought not such a condition to appeal to some one to try to get the meeting out of the ruts?

2. Monotony represses individuality. God has made each of us unlike every one else for the express purpose of introducing variety into the world. Variety, therefore, is sanctified; monotony is unsanctified. When we do things just as other people do, we stultify our personality and rob our action of a certain piquancy that the free play of our personality gives it. Naturally, one person's way of conducting a meeting would be different from that of others, unless he repressed his individuality by slavishly imitating others; in which case the meeting would lose the charm of his personality. Where conventionalism rules as much as it does in the church, it is easier to be a parrot than to be a man or woman. Self-assertion is hard. But there are ways in which we can give play to our individuality, and so make the prayer-meeting helpful and interesting, and at the same time keep clear of the two extremes —timidly fearing to be ourselves lest we be thought eccentric, and thinking that we must be eccentric in order to be ourselves.

(1) Variety in the arrangement of the room is worth attention. If the prayer-meeting room is seated with movable seats, and it has been the custom to have them always in straight, prim,

unsocial rows, so that every one must look at the back hair of the others, ask the janitor, for once, to arrange the seats in sociable semicircles. If it is a stormy night, and but few are present, place the seats in a circle in the centre of the room. As people enter, they will straighten up with a new interest. They will be on the *qui vive*. An air of expectancy will pervade the meeting. This is not an adaptation of "yellow journalism" to the prayer-meeting; it is simply recognizing a principle which is constantly requiring new adjustments in the furniture of our homes, in our dress, and our food. Why should the same people who rearrange everything else to get new effects, be confined to the one, unvarying, tedious treadmill, in the prayer-meeting? In other words, why should a prayer-meeting be dull, any more than the social gathering, or the primary election in which the same people participate?

If the table at which the leader sits has always stood at one side of the room, move it occasionally to another place, but be careful not to move it farther away from the audience. If there is a frigid, empty space between the leader and the front row of occupied seats, move the table nearer the congregation. In some prayer-meetings the leader is so far away from those whom he leads that a megaphone would seem to be a natural accessory.

There are a score of other little things that may be done to freshen a prayer-meeting room. Sometimes the whole order of things may need to be turned, just as we turn an old garment and make it almost as good as new, by a new pattern, a little fresh binding, and a few new buttons. Don't be afraid of introducing the element of surprise into the meeting. Do the unexpected and informal thing when it seems to be *the* thing to do. Get the church choir to come and sing. Ask the young people to visit the church prayer-meeting in a body. Invite the pastor and deacons to visit the young people's meeting. Don't court novelty for the sake of novelty, but use novelty as an inducement to worship. God wants His sheep led into "green pastures"; are our prayer-meetings keeping them on the old, dry stubble? There is enough individuality in almost every church to make the prayer-meetings fresh and attractive. It isn't looked up and enlisted. We leave all the praying and speaking to "the faithful few," when a little more "gumption" would draw out new voices, and a little more thoughfulness would lead us all to lay aside our stilted, conventional manner.

(2) The way in which the meeting is opened counts for a great deal. If it has been the unvarying custom to do this in a set way, don't do it that way; it isn't necessary. There are so many other ways, if one will just think a moment.

Open with silent prayer. Open with a solo. Open with sentence prayers. Open with a blackboard talk. Open, by prearrangement, with remarks from some one in the pews. In the young people's meeting open with comments by six members on the six daily readings. Open with Bible verses given by the members as testimonies. Open with the scripture reading. It would be unpardonable to create the impression that new ways in a meeting are a substitute for the Divine presence which all have come to realize; new ways are simply a means for arousing those present out of lethargy, and helping them to expect and seek the presence of Him who alone is the life of the meeting.

(3) Much variety may be introduced into the reading of the scripture lesson. Perhaps the most common, and least interesting way, is for the leader to read the entire selection. Often that is necessary; there are no Bibles in the hands of the congregation. But often when there are Bibles, the leader does all the reading just the same. It is an element of monotony. There are at least half a dozen ways of varying this part of the programme. The leader may have the congregation read responsively with him. He may have them read in concert. If the passage is familiar, like the Twenty-third Psalm, or the Beatitudes, it may be repeated from memory. The gentlemen and ladies may read alternately.

Those in the front row may read the first verse, those on the second row the next, and so on.

(4) Variety may be had by new combinations of the three or four elements that enter into every prayer-meeting: prayer, scripture-reading, testimony, remarks by the leader, announcements, etc. Leaders who fancy that it must be very difficult to be original in planning a prayer-meeting, and to introduce any variety, need only remember what a simple and easy thing it is to make an original song, just by changing the relative positions of the eight notes of the musical scale. A similar rearrangement of the constituent elements of a prayer-meeting may give as new and pleasing results. For instance, if the meeting has always had a praise service at the beginning, open your meeting in some other way. If it has been the unvarying custom to follow the praise service with prayer, bring the prayer in at some other time. Get out of the rut. Change the meeting end for end, if desirable. Make a new combination, and you will awaken a new interest, because you will set people to thinking. Doing things in a mechanical, routine way is one of the most fatal hindrances to thoughtfulness; it is an opiate in the prayer-meeting. We should never come into the presence of God like unthinking machines, therefore we should not have a set routine for the prayer-meeting.

(5) The use of set, pat phrases is another element of monotony. The leader of the prayer-meeting should study to be unstudied. He should not fall into the stereotyped way of saying and doing things. If every other leader has said, "The meeting is now open, and we hope that you will improve the time," don't say that. Say something different. Let it be dignified, and perfectly natural to yourself, but avoid stale, trite expressions, as you would a rattlesnake. In so many prayer-meetings there is so little that sounds spontaneous or has the ring of actuality, that religion seems to consist mostly of a lot of pious phrases that people use in the prayer-meeting and nowhere else.

One of the most deadening things for a young people's society is to fall heir to a collection of stock phrases that have been handed down from one leader to another, until every one present knows in advance just what the leader is going to say at a given point in the meeting. Eschew all such "prayer-meetingisms." Be yourself, and you will render better service to God and your fellows, than if you try to be a vest-pocket edition of Deacon A——, or Parson C——.

(6) The details of the prayer-meeting should be studied carefully. That means a good deal of plodding. Let no one get the impression that only a genius could avoid monotony, and make a meeting interesting. Patient attention to de-

tails is better than genius. Geniuses are not as good leaders as common plodders. Geniuses want to do it all themselves. Plodders draw out others. They are willing to plod in little byways. They are willing to be helpful, where geniuses want to shine. The thing that the leader forgot, is usually the thing that mars the meeting. A big idea in the rough is not worth half so much as a small idea carefully worked out. Plan your meeting:—the opening, the closing, the middle, the song, the Scripture-reading, the ventilation, the lights, the arrangements of seats, the tone of voice you will use, the coat you will wear, the sub-divisions of the topic, the persons who are to coöperate with you, the reception of strangers, the announcements, the accompanyist's work, the ushering, the sexton, everything that enters into the meeting that is under your control. When you have planned your plan, polish it, perfect it, familiarize yourself with it, and watch its execution.

(7) Variety may be found in meetings of different character—special meetings designed to be out of the ordinary, and to pull the prayer-meeting out of a rut. Some of these special meetings are: Praise meetings composed almost entirely of joyful songs; promise meetings, in which each one repeats Scripture promises from memory; evenings with popular hymn-writers, like Fanny Crosby, in which the hymns of that author are

sung and a sketch of her life and a history of some of her hymns given; biographical meetings, in which the life of Luther, Wesley, Knox, Finney, or some consecrated man, is the basis; for the young people's prayer-meeting, committee-meetings, in which the committees take part, as such, and express some purpose for larger work; quotation-meetings, in which helpful quotations from some popular religious book, like "In His Steps," or "The Sky Pilot," are given; favourite-passage meetings, in which each one repeats his favourite passage of Scripture, and tells why he likes it best. These are a few of many special kinds of meetings that may be used to stir a new interest in the prayer-meeting when it has become a treadmill affair. Later, an entire chapter of the book will be given to plans in detail for a variety of meetings. Just here one is given which was rather a feature of a meeting, than a programme for an entire meeting. The following blank was given out a week in advance to all who were likely to attend the meeting, to be filled and returned without signature. The topic for the meeting was, "Our Heavenly Home."

"Does heaven appeal to you most as a *place* corresponding to the beautiful descriptions in the Bible, or as a *state* of purity, peace and perfection that would itself be bliss, regardless of place?

"What part of the symbolism of heaven used in the Bible is most closely identified in your

thought of heaven—robes, palms, crowns, singing, golden streets, the throne, etc.?

"Do you think of heaven as a condition of rest from labour?

"Do you think of heaven as a chance for new achievement?

"Do you look forward to enjoying again association with friends already gone?

"Is this hope a helpful influence in your life?"

The answers were tabulated, and a report of the result was read in the meeting, with specially interesting answers quoted in full. It proved to be a most quickening and helpful variation from the stock prayer-meeting, and many expressed their appreciation of the innovation.

But let none think, from the emphasis that has been laid upon variety and freshness, that the most important thing about a prayer-meeting is to have new methods. Motive is always more than method. New methods are like new cog-wheels in a machine; unless there is steam power to drive them they are only dead weight. What is needed is not so much a revamped prayer-meeting as a revitalized prayer-meeting. Life is always more attractive and potent than machinery. But mechanical devices often help life. The splint binds the broken bones together until vital union can be effected. Methods may be a help to introducing new life into the prayer-meeting; but we must depend, not on the meth-

ods as an end, but as a means to an end—LIFE. It may be said that if we have the Holy Spirit present we shall need no new-fangled methods. If we have the Spirit we shall *have* all the *best* methods; He is the inventor of all that makes worship more helpful. "Having the Spirit" is no substitute for the exercise of our own wits. The Spirit does not favour lazy Christians. If we are not inventive and progressive we shall not long "have the Spirit," and that is just what ails many prayer-meetings.

XIV

GETTING MUTE MOUTHS OPEN

In many prayer-meetings are tongue-tied persons. Their tongues wag fast enough in society, or business, or politics; but in the prayer-meeting they are silent. The perplexing question is to get a larger percentage of professing Christians to give expression to their religious impressions. The prayer-meeting is being talked to death by the few. The same half-dozen voices are sending up the same stereotyped petitions. How can the many be interested in the prayer-meeting?

That is just the point at which leadership comes in. In a well led meeting the many take part. The led do more than the leader. "Oh," some one says, "I can't get them to; I have to do it all myself." That reminds me of a leader who talked for half an hour about the healing of the ten lepers, frequently repeating the query, "Where are the nine?" When he finally finished, he invited the congregation to use the little time left. The first one to respond said, "I should like to answer the question, 'Where are the nine?' I think that the first leper who came back talked so long that the other nine had no time left in which to give any account of themselves."

Let us start with this sound principle: nothing can help so much to make a prayer-meeting interesting to any one as to get that one to do something in it to help make it interesting to others. In order to do this,

1. The meeting must be thoroughly planned. The improvised meeting is likely to be either dull or frothy. The following is a recipe for a menu on which any prayer-meeting will starve: "Some hymns chosen at random, some aimless prosings in prayer, an unpremeditated scripture-lesson, and a rambling talk, compounded in haste and served in slovenly style."

In the first place, the leader needs to feel the dignity and importance of his position. It is *the* opportunity of the year, perhaps, for him to serve twenty, forty, a hundred of the Lord's children. A certain steamship company has this motto for its captains, "In all the world no trip like this." The whole effort of the voyage is to make the passengers believe and enjoy in accordance with this motto. This is the way a leader should feel about his meeting. Like the captain of the steamship, he is the host. He is to see that every guest feels at home, and has a profitable time. The bashful are to be drawn out of their coyness. The dull gaps between the courses are to be filled. Each guest is to feel that he has filled a place of honour. To accomplish this the leader will plan,

(1) His opening. To fail to do this may be virtually to close the meeting by the bungling way in which it is opened. A few years ago a blundering pilot sank his boat in the entrance to the "Soo" canal, and for twenty-four hours the channel that bears the heaviest tonnage of commerce of any waterway in the world was blocked to hundreds of waiting steamers. An unprepared and blundering leader may do as much for his meeting. We have seen meetings of which the leader declared, "The meeting is now open," that were really closed as tightly as the "Soo" canal, because the leader said too much, or not enough, or had not planned for what was to come after he had said his "say." Perhaps he had sucked the subject as dry as an orange that a small boy has had. The better an exhaustive leader speaks on the topic, the worse he speaks, for he intimidates from taking part the very ones whom he should have encouraged.

Or, perhaps, the leader has presented the topic in so vague and intangible a way that others felt, "There is nothing in it for me." One of the best services that a leader can render is to "crack the topic open," leaving the others to pick out the kernel. The opening remarks should leave distinct lines of cleavage; should furnish pegs on which to hang prayers and testimonies; should be suggestive, rather than exhaustive. This may be done

by a simple subdivision of the topic into three or four heads, each of which furnishes some hand-hold for those who are desired to discuss it, or "lead in prayer." Sometimes these subdivisions may be assigned beforehand to members of the young people's society or congregation who might not otherwise take any part in the meeting. Suppose the theme to be, "How May I Know My Bible Better?" Such a division as the following is suggestive: 1. How may busy people get time for Bible study? 2. What I have found to be some of the best helps for Bible study. 3. Why I like topical Bible study. 4. Some prayers in the Bible that have helped me.

(2) Crutches for the lame are good, but litters for the sound should not be sanctioned. One form of crutch found effective in the young people's meeting is a passage of scripture bearing on the topic, handed to the mute member, with the request that he add to it some expression of his own as to the light the passage throws on the topic, or follow it with a prayer for understanding and strength to practice its truth. This leads a timid member beyond the "verse-reader's class." The leader needs to be very quick and generous in his appreciation of every effort on the part of more inexperienced members to give expression to their own inner life. One word of recognition is worth a thousand of scolding. Always, a question, or something calculated to

draw out the individual, should accompany the scripture reference; bare verses should seldom if ever be used.

The familiar expedient of distributing clippings from religious papers, quotations and poems for use in the young people's meeting, may be so greatly overworked as to make spiritual paralytics. Like Bible verses, these may be used merely as mouth-openers—to accustom young people to the sound of their own voices. When the quoter finds how easy it is to keep the pledge in this way, the danger is that he will put his whole religious life into quotation marks. The effect of much of this sort of thing is to give the impression of a cheap kind of Christianity. Not that a verse or a quotation is always a cheap testimony. When the heart beats a rat-a-tat against the breast at the thought of standing and doing even so simple a thing as that, it may mean a much more heroic stand for Christ than the glib five-minutes' utterance of some older person. But just so soon as verse-reading and quoting becomes easy and mechanical, then it becomes a cheap testimony, and works harm to the spiritual life of the one who satisfies his conscience that way. All of these methods must be taken with their limitations. The first has worked well, under my personal observation. When a member of the congregation has been asked a week beforehand by his pastor to discuss briefly a subdivision

of the topic in the church prayer-meeting, or to make a prayer for the sick of the community, or the Sunday-school, he feels a deeper obligation to contribute his part towards the prayer-meeting, and will usually respond even though he is not in the habit of doing so voluntarily.

In the young people's meeting the same tactics —personal solicitation by the leader and the lookout committee—will induce many to take part. It should be done *before* the meeting, and not *in* it. Sometimes a "participation thermometer," or a "weather chart," showing to the eye the relative number who have kept their pledge, has proved a stimulus. "Red and Blue" contests, awarding points to the respective sides for participation, have been reported stimulating.

But when all has been said and done, will there not always be a considerable percentage of Christians who will consider their religious experiences their private property, and who will prefer to obey exclusively the injunction, "When thou prayest enter thy closet"? In the English young people's societies this condition has been met, and the definitions of prayer and worship much broadened, by inviting members to bring to the meeting flowers, food for the needy, etc. Each bouquet with a binding of Scripture text around it, is counted as real a taking part in the meeting as a verbal prayer or testimony. One

could wish that might be true in all our young people's and congregational prayer-meetings. Why not recognize the fact that there are those who can *do* for Christ better than they can *say*, and make a larger place in our prayer-meetings for those who have brought their prayers for the naked and sick and hungry in a basket? Why should not a loaf of bread, or a glass of jelly, or a garment, or a magazine or book, or a bouquet, be counted as worship of Him who has said, "Inasmuch as ye have *done* it unto one of the least of these little ones, ye have done it unto Me"? I would not confuse the prayer-meeting with the relief committee, or poor fund, but I would broaden its scope in every way possible and connect it with practical life.

2. The leader's plans should include a chance for everybody. To insure this is an easier matter than most may surmise. In a young people's meeting having, say, thirty present, let the leader ask one to announce the opening hymn, two to engage in opening prayer, another to give out the second hymn, eight or ten to read or recite each a verse or two of the Scripture lesson, one or two to sing solos or a duet, one to announce the missionary prayer cycle, one to give the report of the information committee, four to speak on subdivisions of the topic, four more to announce hymns at intervals (not the bare calling of a number, but some word calling attention to

the spiritual import of the hymn), and half a dozen to make chain prayers. That provides for the thirty, which is more than is necessary, since there is always a certain percentage that can be depended upon to take part voluntarily. The parts assigned by the leader should *never be given to these.*

Where a young people's society is too large for such a plan, two courses are open: first, the meeting may be broken up into group meetings, or sectional meetings, as is done in Russell Conwell's church, Philadelphia, with its seven sections of the Christian Endeavour society, and by others that might be mentioned. These divisions may be made on alphabetical lines, or by sexes, or on any plan desirable, each group to hold its own meetings, but all the groups coming together as often as is best for mass meetings. Rev. C. E. Bradt, Ph. D., formerly of Wichita, Kan., advocates dividing any society having more than a hundred members. Second, certain ones may be designated to take part one week, others the alternate week.

But where this is not practicable, there is still one resort that may enable a leader to draw from all some expression of their loyalty to Christ, especially in a young people's meeting, though its use might be distasteful to some young people's societies, and to many congregational prayer-meetings. It is the method of closing

the meeting by asking all who have not had an opportunity to express their Christian purposes, but would like to do so, to stand with the leader and repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Twenty-third Psalm, the Beatitudes, or some familiar passage of Scripture. Or, they may simply stand. If all that has been said in preceding chapters is utilized, there must result a great improvement in the matter of mute Christians, in all the church prayer-meetings.

3. A word may not be out of place about over-planning a meeting. Many a prayer-meeting has been planned to death. No plan should take up more than a third or half of the hour allotted. Ample room must always be left for the spontaneous participation that ought to be expected, and that must not be planned out. What we want to do is to plan our meetings *alive*. A plan for a meeting should be like the skeleton of a sermon—"the bones should not stick out." Let the plan be concealed: the results seen and felt.

All our plans should be flexible, and not rigid. If we have planned to develop a certain line of thought in a certain way, and some pious soul runs across our path, there should be no spirit of criticism or chilliness in the atmosphere to make such pious souls as cannot adapt themselves to our plan feel that their efforts are out of place in the meeting. We need, also, a spirit of recep-

tivity to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, so that our plans may become His plans; for only as He suggests, owns, and blesses our plans can they glorify God.

XV

LITTLES, THAT MAKE OR MAR A MEETING

A CHAPTER about trifles will not necessarily be a trifling chapter. The little things sometimes count most heavily. Any one of this catalogue of "littles" may make some one wish he had stayed away from the meeting.

1. Promptness in beginning and closing is a small thing, but it is better to begin on time, even with no one to play the accompaniments, and only half a dozen worshippers, than to lose ten minutes waiting for the laggards. A meeting begun behind time carries a sense of weakness all through. If it is the leader's fault that it is late, he must begin with the handicap of a consciousness of having cheated every one present of five or ten minutes, to say nothing of having put an affront upon God that he would shrink from putting on his employer, or upon any business man with whom he had made an engagement. If he cares for this, he will be hampered all through by a sense of shame and regret. If he does not care, he is too callous to lead a meeting.

2. The atmosphere of the room is another important trifle. By this more is meant than the

proportion of oxygen, though that is an important matter. More than one public-school teacher has told me that if the ventilation of her schoolroom was looked after no better than that of the prayer-meeting room, she should expect that her pupils would go to sleep over their tasks, as she has an irresistible desire to do in the prayer-meeting. A musty room is anti-devotional. Leaky gas-fixtures are Satanic. Dust is diabolical. But the spiritual atmosphere is to be reckoned with, also. Cordiality and brotherliness are more than oxygen. The young people's society has a social committee which sometimes greets strangers at the door. Often in the church prayer-meeting, the minister is on the rostrum, and there is no one to show a stranger a seat, or make him feel a bit at home, as he enters. It is a great thing to get the ice melted before the meeting begins. Bearing in mind what was said in the last chapter about getting as large a number as possible to bear some part in this service, many will take part who otherwise would not do so, if the atmosphere is warmed above the congealing point before the meeting opens. It is a mistake to save all the sociability for the close of the meeting. The minister feels that he cannot well get near the door to shake hands until the meeting is dismissed. The members of the church, who are in the relation of hosts to visitors or newcomers in the community, sit as stiff

as ramrods until the service is concluded. They are afraid that a handshake might be sacrilegious. But mark this, *one handshake before the meeting is worth half a dozen after it.* It used to be the custom in conventions of young people to have an "acquaintance" or "fellowship" meeting at the close: now this feature is almost always held first of all, because it has been found that all the other exercises of the convention were doubled in value if those taking part were well thawed out at the very start. This is as true of a prayer-meeting as it is of a young people's convention. Sociability before the meeting is less likely to dissipate the spiritual effects, than after it.

3. The physical comfort of those present should be looked to. Discomfort in the meeting is another name for the devil. Bad ventilation and a chilled furnace are twin devils. A great many churches would have better prayer-meetings if they had a better janitor. They would have a better janitor, perhaps, if they appreciated him more. They could double their numbers on hot nights if they put in electric fans. They would improve their winter attendance by having storm doors. Do we really want better prayer-meetings? Are we willing to spend a few dollars to get them?

In worldly affairs, even where entertainment only is concerned, these things are assiduously

looked after. An acquaintance once found Maurice Grau, the great opera manager, in the topmost gallery of the Metropolitan Opera House, throwing bits of paper in the air. Questioned as to his motive, he answered, "Trying to discover draughts. One sneeze will interrupt and blemish a prima donna's song."

Dim lights in a room make against the success of a meeting. Who has not seen an audience "queered" past restoring to its normal frame for fifteen minutes, by so small a thing as a leader trying to read the scripture selection by a light that made him squint and stammer, and finally cross the room, mumbling apologies?

A remedy for a "dopey" atmosphere is to have the audience rise and sing a hymn, while the windows on opposite sides of the room are wide open. No one will take cold while singing, and those that won't try to sing, ought to take cold. Have the windows closed during the singing of the last stanza. Oxygen is a fine promoter of spirituality.

Another mistake is to keep people sitting too long in the same position. Cramped and weary limbs, and bodily discomfort distract the mind from worship. The psalmist said of the Lord, "He remembereth our frame." Some leaders don't. Enough of the hymns should be sung standing to give needed changes in position.

4. Good order is a concomitant of a good

meeting that may most concern young people's meetings. Whispering, low talking, laughter in the room distract attention from worship. When there are many young people of the "tee-hee" age, such disturbance is likely to come through thoughtlessness, and needs to be met with tact. Scolding adds fuel to the flame. What might repress levity, if it came from an elder, only provokes defiance, coming from a stripling or a young miss. If the leader shows irritation or loss of control, the case is hopeless; he must control himself before he can command others. Some giddy girl will give her head a saucy toss and whisper to her chum, "Mr. High-and-mighty needn't think that he can lord it over *me*." Or, the "gang" of young "hobble-te-hoys," "half man and half boy," will proceed to make it interesting.

But these pert young misses, and these hoodlumish boys are splendid material in the rough. They are a challenge to the Christian young people to redeem them. Any open clash ought to be avoided. It is a case for much prayer, and tact, and winsomeness. Usually it will be found that the disturbers were unruly simply because they had nothing else to do. Remove that temptation. Find a way to use them. Organize them into a choir. Get them to take part in a Bible-reading, or a song service, and a repetition of the offense will have been obviated.

5. Indistinct speaking sometimes makes discord in a meeting. A hymn is announced so indistinctly that the accompanist turns to one piece and begins to play it, while the audience turn to another and begin to sing it, until the discord stops everything, and they sit and stare at each other. It is better never to announce at the same time the number of the hymn and the number of the page on which it is found. Some one is sure to get mixed. It is good to repeat the number of the hymn, so that some dull ears that did not quite catch it the first time, but are straining to do so, may get it correctly the second time. When some one other than the leader suggests a hymn, the leader should always repeat the number distinctly. Mumbling is another devil that works great mischief in the prayer-meeting.

If certain stanzas of the hymn are to be omitted, it is better not to state that in giving out the hymn; for some one will be sure to forget which ones are to be omitted, and part of the congregation will sing a wrong stanza, while the other part sing the right stanza, and the effect will be anything but edifying. If the third and fourth stanzas are to be omitted, just at the close of the interlude after the second, announce, "Fifth stanza."

6. Fussiness in a leader is a little thing that mars a meeting. A nervous leader puts every

one else on nettles. To fumble the pages of the hymn book while another is speaking is disconcerting, to say the least. Some leaders think that they must keep talking or the meeting will not "go." They interject so many remarks, that others are afraid to take a part lest they interrupt the leader. Fussiness may be shown by frequent changes of position—crossing the leg over one knee, and then uncrossing it and crossing the other leg; pulling at the necktie; running the fingers behind the collar; feeling of the lower ends of the cuffs; playing with the watch-charm, snapping the case, etc. Another type of leader whose fussiness is objectionable, is he who is in mortal terror lest a minute should go to waste, and who, every time he hears the clock tick, thinks that there is a sinful pause that should be filled. A leader is not a driver. He is not there to see that certain tasks are performed in a stipulated time. He is simply the leader; he should be quiet, cool, tactful, the servant of all, and yet the *leader.*

7. Diversions from the central theme need to be guarded against. The main purpose of the prayer-meeting is to promote the devotional spirit in unison with the theme assigned. If there is congregational or society business to be transacted, let it come first, and not break in upon the devotions. For this reason, the announcements that need to be made, communications that

are to be read, and all matters not related to the theme of the evening, should come early in the meeting, so as not to switch the minds of the worshippers off the theme later.

Then, a watch needs to be kept against those things that are anti-climactic in their nature. Thoughtless or obtuse persons often spring irrelevant questions. The man or woman with a hobby is often present. Some one lacking in sweetness wants to administer a castigation. After such wrenches, the thought of the audiences must be guided back to the main channel. This must be done without seeming to administer a rebuke to the offender. A hymn that is in full sympathy with the theme from which thought has been diverted may swing the ship back to its course. A prayer by one of the most tactful saints may set matters right. Some well-chosen words, which, while they graciously recognize the value of what has been said that was in the nature of a digression, gently but firmly lead back to the main thought. To keep the meeting on the main track, and prevent its being side-tracked in some unexpected way, by an untimely hymn, or prayer, or remark, or fainting fit, or a fire-engine, is a delicate and creditable work.

A host of small things that fall into this category suggest themselves, but we must satisfy ourselves with one or two brief hints more. Giving out a hymn for which you are not sure

the accompanist has music may make confusion. Leaving the leader's place to go to the rear of the room to speak with the sexton, is not conducive to devotions. It is better to beckon him, or still better to send a note. Disputing about any matter is hardly in good form. The violent use of the handkerchief, facing the audience is sure to be offensive to some. As good breeding is required in the house of God as in the parlour of a friend.

Perhaps some one who is restive under a conviction that the prayer-meeting is losing its popularity and power, may turn from this chapter impatiently, exclaiming, "Why say so much about little things, when the prayer-meeting is dying for want of spiritual life?" If we are not willing to study the problem of the prayer-meeting in its relation to little things as well as great things, we show a lack of appreciation of it, and of patience and thoroughness in dealing with it, that does not augur well for bringing more spiritual life into it. Not that it can be renewed in vitality by scientific methods; "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." But the Spirit of God comes in response to a spirit of consecration in the church, and we need to be willing to consecrate ourselves to painstaking in little things as well as great.

XVI

PRAYER-MEETINGS THAT SAG

A PRAYER-MEETING should be serious always, but never melancholy. A gloomy, depressing meeting is as much a failure as a sad wedding. The prayer-meeting *is* the wedding supper of the King. Unless it is in a time of some great national or local calamity, a normal prayer-meeting will be cheerful and inspiring. The test of a prayer-meeting, then, is,—does it uplift? Does it give men and women new heart and gladness, or does it sag and drag, and depress? Is it a mistaken diagnosis that four-fifths of the difficulty about attendance on the prayer-meeting is due to the *kind* of meetings? prosy, hackneyed, vitiated, depressing, carried on in a minor key, with a good deal of lachrymal gland, and sanctimonious tone, and warmed-over experiences—the kind of meeting that saps a man's spiritual forces, instead of electrifying him. Some of the elements that combine to make this so are:

1. A small attendance. If this is chronic, and stands out in contrast with former crowds, it is an element of depression. It tends to make people blue, to make the meeting sag. But there is a sure antidote for this: emphasizing the pres-

ence of God. I fear we do not make enough of this. We do not reiterate it as we might, until the Divine presence becomes a reality, so blessed and uplifting as to more than atone for the absence of numbers. May we not learn a lesson from some of the newer religious cults that are making so much of the simple formula: "God is here; He is in this place." Would not that be far better than to call attention, in a dolorous way, to the fact, "man is *not* here; he is *not* (numerously) in this place?" Put on the blackboard, where all cannot help seeing it, the promise of Jesus, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst." It might be well to have that last declaration, "there am I in the midst," printed on a card and put into the hands of every one as he enters, or sits down. Sing a great many hymns that speak of His presence. It rests tired people. It gives new inspiration to discouraged ones. It is the most refreshing, gladdening element that can enter into a prayer-meeting, and the very thing that most of all will attract careworn, nervous, business-driven, and society-ridden people to the house of God—a realization of His life-giving presence. "A small attendance?" What does it matter? *God* is here! Nothing is small with Him.

2. A low spiritual tide in the church may cast a depressing spell over both the church prayer-meeting, and that of the young people.

Perhaps everything in the church is lagging, whereas everything used to move with a great swing. It is hard for those present not to compare the present lethargy, or life-and-death struggle, with the "good old times." Perhaps there is a disposition to harp upon this; to scold the absent ones over the shoulders of the faithful few present. Two or three chronic scolds may spoil the prayer-meeting for scores of people, without meaning to do harm. A meeting with such a drift needs to be turned into a praise meeting. Turn the search-light upon the things for which thanks may be given.

If it is a decadent rural church in the East, praise God for the men it has raised up to serve in other churches. Recently in one of the Boston denominational social organizations, when the question was asked how many of those present had passed their boyhood in the country, a large majority of the two hundred and fifty present arose. It was a striking comment on the depletion of country churches to pour the flower of their manhood into larger communities. Should such a church mourn because it is giving to sustain the cause at the strategic centres? Rather let it rejoice. Once a year, at least, have a praise meeting for God's goodness in so using the seed of the church. Call the roll of the absent ones, and read letters from them, telling of their service where they are.

Emphasize the glad thing, the hopeful thing, and not the apparently discouraging thing. Look at the "silver lining" in the cloud, and if there is none discernible, "turn it inside out" in search of one. Read together David's most jubilant psalms. Arrange with some of the most optimistic church members to tell of the things for which they feel thankful. Why should a mortgage on the church spoil the prayer-meeting? A church with a mortgage for more than half its value was dragging out a precarious existence. A fire destroyed everything but the bell—and the mortgage. Within a few years that discouraged band had a new edifice, better located and costing five times the value of the old one, and the mortgage and all debt on the new church wiped out. And since it has built a parsonage. We croak over a great many things that only seem to be misfortunes.

Another good way to divert attention from local ills is to dwell on denominational prosperity. Praise God for the success of your foreign missions—they belong to you: your local work is only a small department of the whole church life. Praise Him for the wide-spread evangelistic successes. Praise Him for the growing spirit of Christian unity. Praise Him for the advancement made towards international peace and arbitration. Praise Him for victories anywhere. It will take the poison of discouragement out of

your blood, and prepare the way for new local successes. A discouraged man and a croaking church need a blood rejuvenator, before they can ever be used for aggressive work. The best spiritual tonic is a broad outlook, and a heart full of praise for God's marvellous works.

Depend upon it, we shall never attract to our prayer-meetings the men and women we want—the most virile, the most aggressive, the leaders in business, and society and politics, as long as the tone of the meeting is depressing; as long as we whine over past defeats or present difficulties. Let us look our prayer-meeting over carefully, and ask ourselves candidly, "What have we to offer, on prayer-meeting night, to men and women who are out of touch with our Christ, but who need to be impressed that there is a real joy, a jubilant victory over lower and baser things, in coming into His presence?"

4. Another way to keep the blue devils out of the prayer-meeting is to avoid singing doleful hymns, or singing cheerful hymns in a feeble or dispirited way. There are enough hymns that have the ring of victory in them, "A wonderful Saviour, is Jesus, my Lord," "Crown Him Lord of all," and "Ring it out with a shout, Halleluia!" Mawkish, lackadaisical hymns do not appeal to strong men. Your bait must be suited to your fish.

5. To sound the triumphant note in our meet-

ings, is to sum it all up, so far as the thought in this chapter is concerned. Nothing else so touches the prayer-meeting nerve, as getting the hopeful, the optimistic, the jubilant strain into our meetings. Too many of them are dyspeptic. They are womanish, not to say old-womanish. They need more of the things that appeal to active men—in the leader more of the straightforward, manly incisiveness of the business world; more of the smiling-faced courage and optimism of the man of achievement; more of the sturdy, forward-march that the very men who are in the prayer-meeting are accustomed to put into the things they do in the world, and which, if they put it into the prayer-meeting in equal proportions, would raise it immeasurably in respect and usefulness. For, do we not see, that what is the matter with the prayer-meeting is not so much that it is decadent, as that we *think* it is decadent; it is our attitude towards it that is hurting it worse.

This hopeful, confident, joyous tone, that we need to get into the prayer-meeting in every way possible, is just the tonic that the world wants. It is the most attractive element in our religion. If we have any influence for good over others, it will never come from being austere and straight-laced, or from scolding and denouncing, or from any kind of soft, effeminate sanctity, but from the cheerful, triumphant nature of our lives.

We can never attract people to travel our way by telling them of our defeats and failures. A "trials-and-tribulation" church member is no better as an advertisement for his cause than a farmer, whose most conspicuous crop is weeds and thistles, is to attract men to the farm.

The young people's prayer-meeting, naturally, has this characteristic of joyousness more abundantly than the congregational prayer-meeting. Nothing has done more to recommend the young people's movement to the world than the impression it has made that Christianity is cheerful. It has given the spectacle of bright-faced, happy, singing disciples. We do not make this comparison to the disparagement of the adult membership of the church, for we can have youth with its vivacity but once. But there ought to come into the older prayer-meeting a reflex of this youthful joyousness. It is one of the things for which we can praise God and be glad. How can a congregational prayer-meeting be in the doleful dumps, whatever else the discouragements, if there is a body of young people in the church serving God with gladness of heart and moving foreward hopefully? It would be like a man mourning because he had little money in one pocket, while the other was full of gold. The one meeting may borrow from the other, not in methods (for the older members of the church might as well borrow the clothes of the

young people as to borrow their ways) but borrow hope, and confidence, and joy.

When the prayer-meeting sags it not only repels men and women who need it, but it drives Christ away. He cannot stay where His children are repining. If we turn His wedding-supper into a funeral, the Bridegroom will not be there.

XVII

A CURE FOR SELF-CENTRED PRAYER-MEETINGS

By the self-centred prayer-meeting I mean that one the tap-root of whose spirituality is being killed by praying too much about "ourselves and our church." It has the inward look, and a morbid, unhealthy atmosphere. Usually the topics in such meetings are too introspective and subjective, and such topics lead those that pray to beseech God vaguely to make them better men and women, but they do not become better because they have no definite objective before them—they do not ask for grace to do some definite service, and then try to perform that service. They besiege the throne of grace with petitions for a revival in the church, but the revival does not come, because the prayers have no objective—no particular persons for whose conversion the members work as well as pray. And so the meetings drag wearily on, with narrow, selfish prayers that cannot be answered, because no one is trying to help answer them, and there is a pervading sense of unreality about the whole business that repels practical men of affairs, who are not accustomed to putting forth

an effort without seeing something brought to pass, and the prayer-meeting seats are filled with women and elderly men.

The first suggestion that I would make for curing the self-centred prayer-meeting, which always is the "gone-to-seed" prayer-meeting, is that a new kind of topics be selected—themes that have the outward, the humanward, the Godward look, instead of the inward, self-centred look. Let me cite as an illustration of my meaning the topics for thirteen consecutive weeks taken from one of our leading denominational weeklies. They have been used in prayer-meetings that I have attended, hence I know of their practical workings. Here are the topics:— "The mystery of pain and sorrow," "The peril of lukewarm Christianity," "Unprofitable friendships," "The inlets and outlets of power," "The rewards of work," "From what does Christ save?" "Salvation as a motive to overcoming," "Salvation forbidding worry," "Salvation freeing the hands for service," "Salvation constraining to usefulness," "Salvation as an encouragement to prayer," "Heroic elements in ordinary life," "Mistaken values."

Not more than three of these topics, at most, can be said to have the outward look, though a skillful leader might make them more effective than they promise. Even the three exceptions:— "Salvation freeing hands for service," "Salvation

constraining to usefuless" (consecutive topics), and "Heroic elements in ordinary life,"—have only a vague outward look; they lack a definite objective. Suppose the first one were phrased, "Salvation freeing our hands for neighbourhood ministries—what are some of them?" or, "Salvation freeing our hands to 'go teach all nations';" or, "How a saved man may help to save his city (or State, or country)," a definiteness of suggestion would have been furnished that would give an edge to the meeting, and a clearness of objective that would aim the prayers at something in particular, instead of praying "up in the air."

The topic, "Heroic elements in ordinary life" is more suggestive, but how much more of freshness and definiteness might have been introduced into the meeting had it been, "Tomorrow's calls for heroism; how shall I honour them?" Still better, I think, though covering a different field, probably, from that contemplated by the original topic, would be a meeting on "Heroism among our life-savers," or, "The heroes of the rails," or, "Heroic home ministries" with a whole meeting devoted to one, or more than one of these classes. It would be a relief from the everlasting talking and praying and singing about ourselves, which is the death of a prayer-meeting; and who deserve the prayers of the church more and get them less than these men in hazardous vocations, for our comfort? Many

a jaded prayer-meeting, that has prayed the benches almost empty beseeching God to pour out more blessings within those four walls, would be aroused to a new sense of "something doing," should it be announced that a whole evening would be spent in prayer for a class of men who had heretofore got only the crumbs of prayer, if anything. Practical men, who now stay at home because of the "close-corporation" nature of so much of the praying, would get a new respect for the church prayer-meeting, and a new incentive to go and pray.

In the Appendix will be found a list of suggested topics for a year. These are not offered so much with the thought of displacing any lists of prayer-meeting topics furnished by denominational or other agencies, as to meet a want of a large number of churches that have never used topics. After trying the experiment with these, they will doubtless be ready to continue with lists furnished by the denominational year book, or by a list made out by the pastor, or a committee. The list in the Appendix may further serve a useful purpose by providing alternate topics, when for any reason it seems desirable to vary from the topics being used. This list is also designed to embody, to some extent, the writer's ideas of topics that have the human interest, that have a practical objective, and meet the conditions set forth in this chapter.

One other thought in reference to prayer-meeting topics. It seems extremely desirable that there should be more unity of prayer in the church. There may be mischief in having a diversity of topics every week. When the Sunday-school directs the mind to one portion of Scripture, and the church prayer-meeting has before it something quite different, and the young people's prayer-meeting a still different theme and Scripture, with the woman's missionary prayer-meeting, and the Junior society, and other organizations yet to hear from, is there not danger that, as Dr. Leonard W. Bacon once put it in a strong protest, that the church shall be "chopped into bits"?

It must be distracting; it cannot be unifying to have so many diverse prayer themes in a week. Now that the themes for the young people's prayer-meeting are based upon some phase of the Sunday-school lesson, why should not the church prayer-meeting themes fall into line and take some other phase of the same Scripture? And why should not the topic for the Juniors be related in some way to this general theme? Why not have the whole church praying around one common centre of thought? The Sunday-school lesson being a fixed point, let all the prayer-meeting themes radiate from that.

The gist of the case against the self-centred prayer-meeting is that selfish praying dries up the

fountain of prayer. Prayer becomes unreal, perfunctory, burdensome, a vanishing quantity. On the other hand, prayer for others reopens the fount; one enjoys intercession when he is tired of begging. The prayer-meeting that is begging itself to death may intercede itself alive.

Notice how it works in every-day life. There is a day when interest in everything is dull. People are languid about their buying and selling. There is no enthusiasm about business or pleasure. The newspapers have little to tell. A brick wall falls and buries the workmen; some miners are entombed under a mass of slate and coal; some children are lost in the woods; the Gloucester fishermen are caught in the ice-floes. Prayer springs spontaneously from thousands of hearts. It is no task, as it is when we keep asking for the same blessings for ourselves. The town becomes alive; the newspapers fill their columns with intensely interesting matter. It is the same way with the prayer-meeting; the point is to bring into it more largely the element of intercession—prayer for others—for those who spiritually, socially, and in other ways, are in as urgent need of sympathy and rescue as the workmen, the miners, the children, the fishermen.

I wish to clinch this argument by issuing a challenge to any prayer-meeting in which interest is languishing, and the attendance of which is waning to a few faithful souls, while the great

majority of the church stay at home. It is simply this: stop praying for the church and the people who go to the prayer-meeting; set before the prayer-meeting unselfish objects for which it has never before prayed—urgent needs in the kingdom of Christ—and within a month new life will begin to pulse through the dead prayer-meeting; there will be prayer for the church and its members, but with a new sense of reality and expectation. In short, the prescription that I would offer for a dying prayer-meeting is, definite objects of prayer that are outside the present radius of prayer; and the doses should be liberal and persisted in until people outside understand that the prayer-meeting has waked up to the needs of the great outer world, and is making a business of pleading with God about the lost sheep. The prayer-meeting that is more interested in the ninety-and-nine that went not astray, ought to wane.

Another thing that needs remedying in the self-centred prayer-meeting is the singing. We are singing too many, "Peace, peace, wonderful peace" songs, when the forces of evil were never so powerfully equipped for war as to-day, and the battle is on, up to our very thresholds. It is too much like the Russian soldiers worshipping their ikons while the Japanese were mounting heavy guns. We are asking one another in song, "Are you in the inner circle?" as though we expected

to find a cushion, a pair of slippers, and a Morris chair there. We need to get to singing, "War, war, strenuous war!" We need to ask one another, not "Are you in the inner circle?" but, "Are you at the post of danger?" While the prayer-meeting sings, "Peace, sweet peace," the devil captures the primaries, the news-stands ship in new installments of corrupting novels, the penny-in-the-slot picture machines line the sidewalks with their lewd postal cards, more deadly than gatling guns, and the cigar-stores order an extra great-gross of cigarettes for our grammar-school boys. Too many of our prayer-meeting songs are simply opiates. We go home saying, "What a heavenly song!" It would be better to have prayer-meetings without a note of song, than to sing songs that chloroform our consciences and sense of responsibility for public good. We need to select the songs of the prayer-meeting as carefully as the topic. They should have the outward look; the battle note. We cannot always sing "Onward, Christian soldier," or "The battle hymn of the republic," or Luther's battle hymn, and it must be admitted that in the choice of songs with the outward look we are much more circumscribed than in the selection of topics, but there is too much singing in the prayer-meeting simply to "feel good."

I believe this is a criticism that will bear examination; our fathers used to sing about God

and His attributes; we sing about ourselves. Compare the old hymns with the modern hymns, and see if this is not true. And I believe that one of the ways to get the outward look in the singing of the prayer-meeting is to sing more of the old hymns that are about God, and fewer of the modern hymns that are subjective, and that consist largely in telling God about ourselves.

The third ingredient in my prescription for curing the self-centred prayer-meeting is, in addition to the outward look, it is important to have the outward reach. I mean by that, those who pray in the prayer-meeting must be got to working in the direction of their prayers. In Boston there are some forty Christian Endeavour societies that send bands of workers regularly to the Merrimac Street Mission. I have been told by the pastors of many of the churches represented that the evangelistic work that the Endeavourers try to do in the mission has a reflex effect in their prayer-meetings in promoting testimony and prayer. The pastor of a suburban church held a conference with his Endeavourers and induced a number of them to take each one of more apartment houses, into the letter-boxes of which they would be responsible for dropping the invitation cards to the services of the church. He expected a twofold result: that some flat-dwellers would accept the invitations; and that the young people who did the work would go to

their prayer-meetings with a new sense of reality in regard to Christian service. When they spoke and prayed about working for Christ, it would not be wholly in the abstract, but something very concrete and real. And it is always easier to pray about concrete things than about abstract truths.

Sometimes, if this outward reach of the prayer-meeting can be had in no other way, it would be better to adjourn the prayer-meeting to the wickedest street corner in the vicinity of the church, or to some drunkard's home that needs the gospel, or to the platform of the railway station, filled with the town loungers, or to the saloon or pool-room. It would give that self-satisfied prayer-meeting pose a pretty hard shaking-up. It would bring home the awfulness of sin, and send the people back to pray with a vividness and pungency they had never had before. When Dr. Dawson organized that street demonstration in Boston, that took a thousand of the church members, headed by the Salvation Army band, on a march through the slums, and they came back to Tremont Temple, bringing a thousand men off the street, some of them so drunk that it took two to hold one upright; women with whom they would have been ashamed to walk by daylight, past their own doors, half-grown hoodlums, swearing and obscene, some of them brought out of the saloons, it did

more to awaken the church members of Boston to the wickedness of the city, and to send them back to their churches to pray for convicting power, than all the sermons of a year could have done.

In some English prayer-meetings loaves of bread and flowers and clothing are brought, and the meeting breaks up into groups who go out to relieve distress and sing and preach Christ to the lost. Such suggestions will shock some of our staid church-goers, but anything is better than the prim, half-dead, droning, self-centred prayer-meeting, with which so many of us are familiar.

XVIII

A JUICY TEMPERANCE PRAYER-MEETING

A YEARLY scheme of prayer-meeting themes for the churches that did not include some temperance topics ought to occasion surprise. The young people's topics usually provide for four temperance meetings a year. Usually these are the meetings over which wry faces are made, "The dryest, dullest meetings of the year," some one says.

Dry temperance prayer-meetings usually make a town go "wet" on election day. The dryness gets into the wrong place. What we want is juicy temperance prayer-meetings, and "dry" excise elections. A temperance prayer-meeting, to meet the above requirement, should be: —

1. Informing rather than inflaming. Mere denunciation of the liquor traffic results in little permanent good, however vehement the denunciation. The object of the temperance prayer-meeting is to convict those present, not already convinced, that intemperance is an economic and moral blunder; and to deepen and intensify the convictions of those already aligned upon the side of temperance, and spur them to practical effort. The best possible means for this end are

telling temperance facts. Probably there will be a larger percentage of those that need convincing in the young people's prayer-meeting, than in the older church prayer-meeting. But either meeting should be informing, that it may be intelligently supplicatory. Fresh, strong facts are the first requisite.

2. Moreover, these facts should be pertinent to the topic—on some definite phase of temperance—and not vague and unrelated. Then, they should be arranged in some coherent, logical order. No mere jumble of facts and incidents, however prolific, can help being confusing and almost profitless. The statement of facts should begin somewhere—with some definite proposition—and lead to a climax with which to close the meeting forcefully.

3. Where may the average Christian get such fresh temperance facts?

(1) Temperance periodicals, like *The Union Signal*, *The New Voice*, *The American Issue*, the *National Temperance Advocate*, the various State Prohibition and Anti-Saloon League papers, *The School Physiology Journal*, Boston, together with nearly all the religious papers, and the papers devoted to the young people's work.

(2) Temperance pamphlets, like *The Prohibition Handbook*, published by the United Prohibition Press, Chicago, twenty-five cents; the leaflets, tracts, books published by the National

Temperance Society, New York, and The Woman's Christian Union, Evanston, Ill., and the reports and other publications of such State and local temperance organizations as the Massachusetts Total Abstinence Society, Boston. *The Lincoln Magazine*, published in the interests of the new pledge-signing movement, and *The Twentieth Century Quarterly*, published by the International Reform Bureau, Washington, both contain helpful matter.

(3) Such books as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps', "A Singular Life," "The Temperance Encyclopedia," by Funk and Wagnalls, New York; Mrs. Hunt's temperance physiologies, Steele's school physiology, and all temperance text-books; any temperance books in the public library, the library of the pastor, or in any of the private libraries of the community.

In the young people's meeting it is a good plan for the leader to induce each member to promise to read one temperance book, pamphlet, or leaflet prior to the meeting. If the adult church members are too busy to do this, some can be found who will take a leaflet or clipping for the pastor or leader, and agree to use the facts in the meeting.

4. What is the best way to present these facts, bearing on the topic, so that they shall make the strongest impression? The chapter treating on the use of the blackboard will furnish

some valuable hints on this point. Note, also, what is said in the following chapter on missionary prayer-meetings, about having facts digested and presented in the first person rather than in the third.

Keep in mind the thought that some one distinct phase of temperance is to be sharply portrayed in each meeting. If there are four temperance meetings a year, as in the young people's meeting, make them as unlike each other as possible. Let there be no overlapping of facts. If there are four temperance prayer-meetings of the adults, or two, or one, the thing to avoid is threshing over old straw. Don't try to cover the whole field in one meeting. Keep the "stock" temperance arguments and stories out of the meeting as much as possible. Make it fresh. Leave something untouched out of which another fresh meeting can be held. This should be the ideal. Perhaps few leaders can hold a meeting strictly up to it; but trying will mean improvement.

5. How to get practical results out of a temperance meeting. The steam that is generated in a temperance prayer-meeting ought to be made to turn wheels. A temperance meeting should never be simply a safety-valve through which Christians let their indignation against the liquor traffic fume and escape. That is the reason that information is better than denunciation. The speaker who simply denounces, or

the hearer who claps his hands over denunciation, and stops there, has simply let off through the safety-valve steam what should have gone through the piston. The pressure is gone; his mind is relieved; he has discharged his sense of obligation, yet nothing has been done but to make a noise. All the results of a red-hot temperance prayer-meeting may thus evaporate in the air, because nothing was presented for people to *do*, after they had been made to *feel*. Feeding a temperance meeting with denunciation is like feeding a fire with straw: you get a quick, hot blaze, but it soon spends itself. Feeding a temperance meeting with facts is like feeding a fire with anthracite coal: it burns with a steady glow for hours and hours.

It is not only useless to make people *feel* if you do not intend to let them *do:* it is criminal. If they are made to feel deeply about the matter, and given no opportunity to transmute their feeling into doing, they are the worse for having felt: it will be a great deal harder to make them feel again. What are some of the practical forms of temperance work to which the temperance prayer-meeting may be harnessed?

(1) Personal or neighbourhood work. If the topic bears upon personal purity or individual abstinence, have some pledges ready for signatures at the close of the meeting, provided there are those in the meeting who have not signed.

If cigarette-smoking is making inroads upon the boys of your community, focus the strength of the meeting upon an anti-cigarette campaign, remonstrances to those that sell, appeals to prosecuting officers, signed by all. If liquor laws are shamelessly ignored, have ready a resolution, a remonstrance, a petition to the authorities to see that laws are enforced. These are only a few of the many ways in which the temperance sentiment of a church or young people's prayer-meeting may be made to turn the wheels of reform in the community.

(2) In matters of State legislation, the prayer-meetings might generate a mighty force. Suppose that better legislation is needed, or that a greedy liquor lobby is trying to undermine existing temperance laws, at the State house. Let the force of the temperance prayer-meeting spend itself in writing letters to legislators. To meet the objection of those who say they do not know how to frame such a letter, have copies of a suitable model struck off (manifolded on a typewriter, hectographed, mimeographed, printed, or copied in pen) and distributed, to be copied and signed. This hint will suggest many other ways.

(3) In national, and even international matters, the church and young people's prayer-meeting may make themselves felt. The same course just suggested for State legislators will apply to congressmen. *The Twentieth Century Quarterly*,

before referred to, is constantly presenting these great moral reforms, such as the keeping of liquor out of army canteens and government buildings, the international movement to prevent traders selling liquor and fire-arms to savage nations, the effort to compel interstate commerce in liquor to respect prohibition and local-option territory, etc. Legislators are sensitive to the church sentiment, when it expresses itself unequivocally. At the close of a temperance prayer-meeting in which any of these phases have been discussed, the natural thing would be to let the sentiment of the meeting make itself felt through a petition to Congress, or individual letters to its members.

To make perfectly plain what is meant by having the temperance prayer-meeting fresh, by using definite phases of the subject for each meeting, and not attempting to cover the whole ground in a vague way at each meeting, a rough division of the field into such definite topics will here be attempted. Please note the following: —

1. The effects of narcotics on the body, mind, and morals.

2. Recent studies in wine-drinking European countries.

3. How the drinking habit effects a business career.

4. Drink in relation to pauperism and crime.

5. The drink question from an employer's point of view.

6. The adulteration of alcoholic drinks.
7. The hereditary effects of drink.
8. Drunkenness as a social problem.
9. The various attempts to legislate drink out.
10. Success in reforming drunkards.

Such a topic as the last was presented most forcibly in one prayer-meeting by the presence and testimony of a number of men who had been redeemed from the appetite for drink. Each of these topics will in turn suggest others. They are enough to demonstrate the needlessness of stereotyped temperance prayer-meetings.

One thing must not be overlooked—the great influence of the prayers of a temperance prayer-meeting. Those at the head of temperance reform could not help feeling a mighty stimulus if all the churches and young people's organizations should join in prayer for the heads of the W. T. C. U., the officers of the Anti-Saloon League, Prohibition party, and other organizations, the editors of the temperance papers, the men in the State legislatures and Congress who are advocating temperance measures, for the millions of teachers who are teaching temperance physiology in the public schools, for the leaders of political temperance reform, for those making research in laboratories and the slums for exact data regarding temperance, and for all others who may be suggested.

XIX

MISSIONARY MEETINGS THAT THRILL

I WOULD make a strong plea for monthly missionary prayer-meetings for the whole church. The young people have theirs; the women's missionary societies have theirs. The men are worse neglected at home than the heathen are abroad, except for an occasional missionary sermon or address, unless the church prayer-meeting sometimes deals with missions. The policy of relegating missionary meetings to the women and children is fatal. More than anything else missions need the men, and men need missions.

But if we have missionary prayer-meetings for the church, they must be of the kind that make people fall in love with missions, and not of the kind that make people fall out with missions. It is possible to have missionary prayer-meetings that will thrill. The fascination, the heroism, the tremendous world-conquest of missions may be so presented as to lift men off their seats. It is the more common experience, however, to have missionary meetings that are stereotyped, and dull, and dreary; these are the meetings that drive men away, resolved never to go to another. The other kind hook them with hooks, and fire their souls with missionary ardour.

Nothing fires the imagination, and makes men's nerves tingle like heroism. Next to war, and love, missions are calculated to appeal to the young mind particularly, but to all minds, for missions are the embodiment of adventure, romance, chivalry, and the marvellous. Missions are the firing-line of civilization's advance around the world. They are the modern Aladdin's lamp, working transformations that need only be shown to astonish and thrill. If missions are not interesting in the young people's prayer-meeting, and in the prayer-meeting of the church, it is because the thrilling, glowing, marvellous facts of missions have been presented in a tame, stupid way.

A missionary meeting that thrills must have its facts presented with something of the vividness, the electric first-handedness of the descriptions of the war correspondent who writes on the field of battle. The missionary facts as presented in many of our missionary prayer-meetings are more like the colourless, lifeless reports that read as if they had been cooked up by the aid of an encyclopedia, in the newspaper office. Missions are the livest, nerviest, realest thing in the Christian church. The stupendous blunder of the ages has been that missions have not been so presented as to grip the men of the church—they contain all the elements that in other affairs do grip men.

How shall we make these facts of adventure

and daring and conquest stand out, full-orbed, in our missionary prayer-meetings, so that men as well as women shall be fascinated and won?

1. Pack the meeting with fresh facts. Give the stock missionary statements and stories and songs a rest. Some of them have been stale and antiquated ever since you can remember. The missionary magazines and libraries are full of up-to-date, vital facts, that are calculated to whet the edge of interest. No activities of the world have produced a literature so rich in strong, dramatic elements, that pique interest, and make hearts glow, as the picturesque and heroic conquest of tribes and nations to the arts of peace and civilization, through missions. There is no more reason that a missionary meeting should be dull, than there is that a political meeting on the eve of a presidential election should be dull. Get the fresh, vibrating facts.

2. Where are such telling facts available? (1) Every church, Sunday-school, and young people's society should have a missionary library. The Student Volunteer library of sixteen volumes may be had for ten dollars. The Conquest missionary library, of the United Society of Christian Endeavor, consisting of ten volumes, may be had for five dollars. The mission-study books, prepared by the Young People's Forward Missionary Movement, representing all denominations, are sold at thirty-five cents each, paper,

fifty cents, cloth, and cover the entire field. Any of these libraries, or any of a score or two of new, bright, captivating books on China, Korea, Japan, Africa, Alaska, and all the ends of the earth are electric with big facts. Besides, in the public library, the pastor's library, in the Sunday-school library, and in many of the homes of the church are books on the latest phases of missionary work.

(2) Every religious denomination publishes missionary magazines and illustrated reports that abound in the most interesting details of missionary life. A missionary or young people's society that cannot afford a bound library, may make one that will serve a good purpose. A scrap-book for each important missionary field, a pair of scissors, a pot of paste, and from the missionary magazines, and the denominational and other religious papers, a great abundance of items that would enliven and enrich a missionary meeting may be transferred.

(3) For the young people's missionary meeting, especially, the United Society of Christian Endeavor, Boston, and some of the denominational missionary boards, publish missionary concert exercises for all the prominent mission fields, that have enough material in them to make most interesting missionary meetings. Some of these exercises by the denominational boards are furnished free; others cost from one cent to ten

cents a copy. Besides these, the denominational boards have a great variety of interesting leaflets, pictures, mimeographed letters from missionaries, stereoscopes, stereopticon slides, and other helpful material which they are glad to furnish free to societies of their denomination. I have had occasion once or twice to arrange an exhibit of missionary literature, at a summer school for young Christians, and I have been amazed at the great wealth, variety and excellent quality of printed matter available for making missionary meetings striking and impressive. A simple letter of request to the boards, stating the object for which the literature was wanted sufficed to fill all the available space in a good-sized schoolroom. I am sure if the great majority realized what helps are to be had for the asking, their meetings would never be lean or dull.

For the church prayer-meeting as well, a number of programmes of missionary meetings will follow this chapter. The materials with which to put flesh upon these skeletons, and make them live, have been indicated already, or will be.

(4) One other source of material with which to make missionary information vibrant with life, is the returned missionary, the travelling secretary of the missionary society, the student volunteer, or others who are living links with missions. This class of speakers should be used, and not abused, in planning missionary prayer-meetings.

It is the practice, particularly of some young people's societies located near the headquarters of mission boards, to plan for a speaker from headquarters to take charge of every missionary meeting. This is an enervating practice for the society. One meeting that young people carry through themselves is worth half a dozen in which they have nothing to do but sit still and listen to interesting speakers. It is likewise true of the congregational missionary prayer-meeting. The best all-around meeting will be the one in which the leader distributes the work of preparation among the largest possible number. If there are extracts to be copied from books, it is better for a dozen to do the copying than for one to do it all. If books are to be gathered and searched, it is better to stir up the whole community as far as possible with the hum of preparation. Nothing could do more to pique curiosity concerning the coming missionary meeting, and stamp it as something unusual, than to have it announced in the prayer-meeting that all the books in the community, on the land to be studied, are to be made to pour out their treasures in the meeting. "The advertising man" would instantly recognize the value of these tactics.

Following up the same principle, the crudest outline map of a mission land that some member of the congregation or society draws is worth

more to the meeting than the most expensive map that could be bought, because it links personality to the meeting. This secret of a successful meeting should be written in bold capitals and kept before the eye:

> "The More People You Get to Take Part in the Meeting, the Greater the Interest in the Meeting."

3. The more specific your missionary facts are, the more telling they are. Never call your meeting vaguely and tritely "a missionary meeting." Announce it under some definite and taking title as, "An Evening with the Hermit Kingdom," "China's swarming children," "By sledge-train through Alaska," or, "Going to school with Mountain Whites." The old-fashioned missionary meeting, that tried to cover the entire globe, and each successive one of which travelled pretty much over the same beaten track as all the rest, is responsible for much of the prevalent impression that a missionary meeting is bound to be tiresome. If there are twelve missionary meetings in a year, each one should have as much individuality as each month of the year has. Missionary meetings dull? The Russo–Japanese war would be a dull subject, if we treated it in the same way that we treat missions.

4. The facts prepared for a meeting on China,

or Alaska, should be presented in the first person instead of the third. Seldom, if ever, have them read to the meeting. The most interesting facts, droned out in a listless, mumbling, impersonal manner will lose most of their charm. The most commonplace facts, if *told* in a lively, interested, personal way, will sparkle with interest. Things *told* are worth ten times as much as things *read*. Get your speakers to tell the facts about the missionary field to be presented as if they had just come from it. Let them impersonate some missionary, traveller, or writer. Or, let them impersonate natives, wearing the costumes of the country. The Butterick patterns now furnish models of many picturesque foreign costumes, which may be made up in cheap coloured stuffs or in crêpe paper, at a trifling cost. Even the persons who use needle and thread to make these costumes will be more interested in the meetings, and in missions, because they have had some small part in preparing for the meeting.

5. Harness the enthusiasm of the meeting to some practical work. All that was said on this point in the chapter on temperance prayer-meetings applies with equal force here. There ought to be no feeling without doing. Harness the emotion awakened in the meeting to the giving of the church. If it is a meeting on city missions, harness it to the rescue missions of the community, that need workers and money. If it

is a theme that inculcates benevolence, harness the sentiment of the meeting to increasing the number of tithe-givers in the church, or the number of Tenth Legioners in the young people's society. Harness it to the formation of a mission-study class in the young people's society, to the purchase of a missionary library, to the adoption of a native worker, to some attempt to lessen the horrors of the rum traffic among the dependent races.

To summarize, in closing, the missionary prayer-meeting that will make people fall in love with missions, even the men of the church, is the meeting that gives them fresh, vital truths about the inspiring, courageous work of missionaries; it is the meeting that utilizes the largest number of people of the congregation or young people's society in preparing and presenting the programme; it is the meeting that presents truth to the eyes as well as the ear; it is the meeting that is as full of definite points as a box of tacks; it is the meeting that utilizes the sentiment it arouses in some definite, practical missionary work—something "worth while." We are told that the twentieth century man must be convinced that a thing is "worth while."

Is it "worth while" to attempt through the prayer-meeting to make missions seem "worth while" to the men of the church? If so, then what better plan can we try than: first, present-

ing the things about missions that are "worth while," and, second, giving men something to do for missions that seems "worth while"?

Some Concrete Plans For Missionary Prayer-Meetings

India

Sing, "From Greenland's icy mountains," "The whole wide world for Jesus," and "The Son of God goes forth to war."

Have an outline map of India on the wall. It need not be an expensive one. Map-drawing is taught in all the grammar-schools, and it will be easy to find a teacher or pupil who can outline a map in black crayon, on muslin or paper. A similar map should be made for each mission field that follows.

Read Isa. 49: 8–13 responsively.

Follow with sentence prayers, closing with a prayer that the Holy Spirit may be poured out more abundantly upon missionaries and schools in India, and upon the volunteers waiting to go to India.

Sing, "Here am I, send me."

Secure some one beforehand to prepare a three-minute paper or talk descriptive of India, geographically, politically, its climate, people, etc.

Follow with a three-minute paper on the religions of India: Buddhism, Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Demonolatry, etc.

Distribute beforehand a gilt star for each mission of your denomination in India, and have those to whom they have been given step forward and pin them to the map. The younger people may be enlisted to do this, and should be instructed beforehand as to the proper place for each star.

Follow with sentence prayers for as many of these missions as practical; request those praying to mention definite missions by name.

Sing, "Wonderful words of life."

By previous appointment, have a three-minute discussion of the benefits Christianity has already brought to India.

Pray for the converts, that they may be steadfast.

Sing, "The morning light is breaking."

Offering (if desired).

Closing prayer.

"Into all the World," U. S. C. E., Boston, and "A Hand-Book of India," Phillips & Hunt, New York, are two excellent and inexpensive books from which to get the information needed on all the topics above mentioned. "Evenings with Missions" (concert-exercises), by Hattie E. Genung, United Society of Christian Endeavor, Boston, 10 cents, will be found full of condensed facts on all these fields that follow.

Africa

Sing, "Speed away," "Christ for the world."

Read responsively Isa. 43: 1–13.

Sing, "Light of the world, we hail Thee!"

Sentence prayers for a new realization of the degradation and need of Africa.

Sing, "Now be the gospel banner in every land unfurled."

A brief description of the political divisions of Africa, by some one appointed beforehand.

A three-minutes' discussion of the peoples of Africa.

Recitation of Kipling's poem, "Take up the White Man's Burden."

Sing, "Tell it out among the heathen."

A three-minute talk on the false religions and superstitions of Africa.

Prayers that these may be overthrown by the truth.

A short description of the "rum curse" in Africa.

Sing, "Christians, up! the day is breaking!"

Instead of gilt stars, little black, china Negro babies might be attached to the map to represent the various mission stations of your denomination in Africa (or of all denominations, if you wish to make a broader presentation).

Have an open parliament of five or ten minutes, in which each one tells in brief the most cheering bit of missionary news from Africa that he has been able to glean. To make sure of the success of this feature, the leader would best prepare and distribute a number of facts.

A season of prayer for the success of African missionaries.

Sing, "O Jesus, Thou art standing!"

Offering (if customary) including pledges for denominational foreign missions.

Closing prayer that Africa may become Christ's.

Doxology.

A book which covers this field in small compass is "Daybreak in the Dark Continent," The Young People's Missionary Movement, 156 Fifth Ave., New York, 50 cents, cloth; 35 cents, paper.

China

Use as opening hymns parts of, "I love to tell the story," "Fling out the banner!" and "Rescue the perishing."

For the opening Scripture-reading, have a Bible reading by seven young ladies, or gentlemen, or a mixed company, as follows: 1. A picture of idolatry, Jer. 7 : 17–20; 2. Shamed by hypocrites, Matt. 23 : 13–15; 3. Faith shown by works, Jas. 2 : 14–18; 4. Constrained by love, 2 Cor. 5 : 11–15; 5. Weakness no excuse, 1 Cor. 1 : 26–31; 6. Our gold for Him, 1 Chron. 29 : 3–5; 7. Christ in China, Isa. 49 : 8–12.

Write on the blackboard, or on a large sheet of paper, a prayer for the emancipation of the women and girls of China, and ask all to join in offering it audibly.

Sing, "Upon the gospel's sacred page."

Have read a brief history of China.

Get a dozen of the younger people to tell each one queer custom or characteristic of the Chinese.

Get the president of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Auxiliary to read a short paper on "Foot-binding" in China.

Arrange beforehand for a series of brief prayers, by a number of individuals, for certain missions in China.

Have some one ready to define Confucianism, in a minute or two.

Sing, "O Word of God, incarnate!"

Have a good speaker tell of present political conditions in China.

Have another tell of some Chinese converts.

Have a season of prayer for the native Christians.

Ask the other officers of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Auxiliary to tell of some of the hopeful signs in China.

Monthly offering.

Sing (standing), last stanza of "Light of the world, we hail Thee!"

Closing prayer, for a "New China," through Jesus Christ.

"Forty Years in China," by Rev. R. H. Graves, D. D., is a good book from which to get needed information. Baltimore: R. H. Woodward Co. $1.50.

Japan

Use as introductory hymns: "Saints of God, the dawn is brightening," "Praise the Lord; ye heavens adore Him!"

Prayer for ability to enter the wide-open door.

Read, men and women alternate verses, Isa. 52: 7–10; Mal. 4: 2, 3.

Use map as in other meetings.

Make this a biographical meeting, largely, and have prepared by members two-minute biographical sketches of such Japanese missionaries as: Rev. C. M. Williams, Dr. J. C. Hepburn, Jonathan Goble, Commodore Perry (his instrumentality in opening Japan's closed doors), G. F. Verbeck, Samuel Robbins Brown, Joseph Hardy Neesima, Dr. J. H. Pettee, or your own denominational missionaries. Have five such sketches read in succession.

Prayer for the work which these missionaries represented, or now represent.

Sing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name."

Five more sketches.

Sing, "When I survey the wondrous cross."

Silent prayer.

Have brief sketches of the Japanese Christian soldiers, sailors and statesmen who have been mentioned in the religious press of this country.

Invite a representative of the Y. M. C. A. to tell of its work for the Japanese army.

Prayer for the Japanese Christians.

Sing, "Lord, a Saviour's love displaying."

The leader should speak of the attitude of Japan towards Christianity at the present time, and the importance of pressing the work vigorously now.

Prayer for increased beneficence for Japanese missions.

Closing hymn, "Work, for the night is coming."

Offering.

Closing prayer for the orphans and widows of the war, and all the missionaries and their families.

"The Mikado's Empire," by Griffis; "Sunrise in the Sunrise Kingdom," by Beach; and "The Gist of Japan," by Peery, are excellent books for preparing for this meeting.

Turkey

Place this meeting in the hands of the Woman's Missionary Society of the church, if there is one. Suggest that all the officers sit on the platform, and that the president lead the meeting.

Sing for the opening hymn, "Go forth, ye sowers of the Lord." Follow with a stanza or two from "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun," and "Ye Christian heralds, go proclaim."

Scripture reading, Rom. 11 : 13–27.

It would be very appropriate to have one of the "mothers in Israel" make the opening prayer.

Let the different sections of the empire:—Turkey in Europe, Turkey in Asia, the Islands of the Mediterranean,—be represented by different women or young girls, who shall speak very briefly each of the climate, products, people, religions, and home life.

Sing, "Forward into service!"

Have leaders appointed to pray for the missions in each of the above sections.

Have a girl represent each of the missionary schools in Turkey. If she is dressed in Turkish costume the realistic effect will be heightened. Let the girls tell, as if they had just come from the several schools, about the life in them, the religious meetings, the graduates, and the effect upon the home life.

Follow with a season of prayer for each of these schools, mentioning them by name.

Sing, "Fling out the banner!"

Offering.

Sing, "Crown Him with many crowns."

Closing prayer.

"My Life and Times," by Cyrus Hamlin, and "Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities," by Bliss, are among the best books on missions in the Turkish empire.

The Islands of the Seas

Sing, "Glory and honour," "Over the ocean wave."

Read in concert, Isa. 42 : 10–13, 16, 17.

Sing, " Speed away."

Make this an " exploration " meeting. Let the leader suggest that it would be pleasant to take a " personally conducted " tour among the island missions, and let him previously train several aids. The first aid may take the tour, after the leader's general explanation, and conduct the party to the Sandwich Islands, the Marshall, Caroline, and Gilbert Islands, giving in five minutes, a bird's-eye view of missions among them.

Have a season of prayer for missions in these more northern Pacific groups of islands.

Sing, " Go on, spend and be spent."

Let the second aid conduct the party to the South Pacific Islands: New Hebrides, New Guinea, Society, etc., giving the same general survey.

Have a season of prayer for the work of Paton, Chalmers, and others.

Sing, " Soldiers of the cross, arise."

Let the third aid conduct the party to Madagascar, and then to other islands, as many as there are time for, in the same way.

Follow with a third season of prayer, as before. The programme may be contracted or expanded to suit the wishes of the leader, including or excluding the Philippines, the West Indies, etc.

Devote one section of five or ten minutes to the heroes of the island missions ; a number of

the younger attendants on the prayer-meeting might be induced to read brief eulogies depicting the courage and self-sacrifice of such men as John Williams, John G. Paton, James Chalmers, Titus Coan, etc.

Sing, " Jesus shall reign where'er the sun."

Offering.

Closing prayer.

" Heroes of the South Seas," by Banks, and " Islands of the Pacific," by Alexander, are recommended for use in connection with this meeting.

Persia

Sing, " Scatter sunshine," " Send the light," " Over the ocean wave."

Read responsively, Dan. 6: 10–28.

Prayer that this word of Darius may be fulfilled.

A three-minute outline of Persian history.

A three-minute sketch of political, social, and religious conditions in Persia.

A statement of the condition of women in Persia.

Prayers for work among the girls and women, the schools and medical missions.

Sing, " While the days are passing by."

A brief sketch of the educational and medical work in Persia.

Have a young lady tell of the results of the work for girls.

Have a physician or nurse prepared to tell of the success of the medical missions.

Sing, "Bringing in the sheaves."

Prayer for the missionaries, mentioning by name those of your denomination, if any (have the names read, or written on the blackboard).

Distribution of literature on Persia from your denominational board.

Offering.

Sing, "O where are the reapers?"

Closing prayer for more workers for Persia.

"Missionary Life in Persia," Perkins, will prove illuminating on this subject.

Korea

(Note,—make this a "picture" meeting as far as possible. *Leslie's Weekly* for 1905–6, and many of the secular and missionary magazines, have been illustrated with pictures of Korean life. Ask the people to bring any pictures of Korea from these sources, from the denominational mission boards, or such other sources as books on Korea, and pass these through the audience as the subject is discussed; or, make an "exhibit" of them on one side of the room, and spend the first five minutes of the meeting examining

them. If Underwood's stereographs on Korea are available, with the help of a few stereoscopes passed around, the subject may be finely illustrated.)

Sing, "Go, preach My gospel," "Salvation, O the joyful sound," "Am I a soldier of the cross?"

Read in chorus, Ps. 126.

Prayer that Korea's new relations may turn to the glory of God.

Let some one, representing a Korean, perhaps by wearing the "chopping-bowl" hat, give a sketch of Korean history.

A brief description of the national dress (pass the pictures).

A bird's-eye glance at the condition of women and children (pass pictures).

A synopsis of the religious life of Korea (pictures of temples, etc.).

Sing, "O for a thousand tongues to sing."

A chain of five prayers for the spread of Christianity in Korea.

A three-minute description of present missionary forces (pictures).

A two-minute statement of the needs of Korean missions.

Sing, "Sow in the morn thy seed."

Offering.

Closing prayer.

"Fifteen Years in the Korea Mission," by Ellen C. Parsons, throws much light on this topic.

Siam and Laos

Sing, "Soldiers of Christ, arise," "What are you doing for Jesus?" "Take my hands and let them be."

Read, Ps. 2: 1–12.

Have two opening prayers, one for each country.

Make the presentation of Siam take the form of a visit to Bangkok, some one being prepared to describe the city briefly, as if the party had just landed there.

Sing, "See the fields of ripened grain."

Have Laos, the North Land, presented by some one who speaks as if he had taken the journey by boat, or on an elephant.

Use an outline map on which Siam and Laos are drawn over the New England and Middle States of the United States, for the sake of comparison.

Sing, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus."

Have a season of prayer that the Buddhism of Siam may be overthrown.

Sing, "Precious promise."

Have a season of prayer that the demon-worship of Laos may be overthrown.

Sing, "Tell me, pilgrim, faint and weary."

Have some one prepared to tell of the progress of Christianity in Siam.

Have another prepared to tell of the success in Laos land.

A number of younger ones might be brought into the meeting by giving out beforehand cards shaped like an elephant having on them statements about Siam.

Sing, "Take my life and let it be."

Offering.

Closing prayer.

"Five Years in Siam," by H. W. Smyth, will give the data needed.

Our New Island Possessions

(A Flag Meeting.)

Hang a large map of the United States, including the Pacific Ocean. Some of the Western railroads publish such a map for advertising purposes, and give it away, on remittance of postage.

Sing, "Lift high the royal standard," "I will follow Thee, my Saviour."

Have young ladies to represent the following: Hawaii, Tutueli, Guam, The Philippines, Porto Rico.

Read, Isa. 42: 10–13.

Prayer for the churches of America, that they may be alert to seize their opportunity.

Sing, "There are lands far away, o'er the sea."

The young lady representing Hawaii fastens a small American flag to that group of islands,

on the map, and tells briefly of missionary work there.

Prayers for new wisdom to meet new conditions in Hawaii.

The young lady representing Tutueli fastens her flag, and tells of religious conditions.

Prayers for the kingdom's growth in Tutueli.

The young lady representing Guam does likewise.

Prayers for Guam.

The young lady representing the Philippines will need more time than any of the others.

Sing, "Sowing in the morning, sowing seeds of kindness."

Prayer for missionaries in the Philippines.

Have Porto Rico placed on the map in the same way.

Prayers for both the educational and missionary work in Porto Rico.

Offering.

Closing song, "All people that on earth do dwell."

Aaronic benediction.

"Our New Possessions," by White, is a helpful book for this meeting.

Arctic Missions

Sing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," "Stand up, stand up for Jesus."

Read, Ps. 68 : 1–14.

Prayer for the missions in Greenland and Labrador.

Sing, " My faith looks up to Thee."

A brief sketch of Greenland and the Eskimo.

Prayer for the brave Moravian and Danish missionaries.

A brief description of Labrador and the Eskimo, Indians, and fishermen.

Prayers for the medical missions, the deep-sea missions among the fishermen, and the work among the Hudson Bay Indians.

Sing, " There is a fountain filled with blood."

Have a reading from one of Dr. Grenfell's books.

Offering.

Closing prayer.

" Apostle of the North," E. R. Young, " Amid Greenland Snows," Jesse Page, and " Vikings of To-day," Grenfell, will give all needed information.

The Mormons

Singing, " Sound, sound the truth abroad ! " " Arm of the Lord awake ! "

Scripture reading, Matt. 7 : 15–23.

Prayer that our country may be purged of this curse.

A paper on polygamy in practice in Utah.

Sing, "Light of those whose dreary dwelling."

Prayer for the women of polygamous homes.

A brief paper on the hereditary effects of polygamy—the children.

Sing, "I think when I read that sweet story of old."

Prayer for the children of polygamous homes.

Brief summary of the political menace of Mormonism.

Sing, "The battle hymn of the Republic."

A brief review of Christian work among the Mormons.

Silent prayer.

Sing, "Come, Lord, and tarry not."

Offering.

Sentence prayers.

"The Mormon Delusion," Congregational House.

Latin America

Sing, "Far, far over the ocean," "I am praying for you."

Read, 2 Cor. 11 : 23–30, men and women alternating.

Show outline map of South, and Central America, and Mexico, with one black cross in each country for each million of Catholic population, or fraction thereof.

Let some one learn which Latin-American States have religious toleration, and mark those countries with a red cross.

Have a brief sketch read of Captain Allen Gardiner, who has been styled " The Apostle to South America."

Sing, " The morning light is breaking."

Call for at least five short prayers for open doors in Latin America for the Bible and missionaries.

Have some one prepared to affix gilt crosses to those countries having Protestant churches—one for every thousand Protestants or fraction thereof.

Sing, " Great God of missions, at Thy feet."

Ask for at least five short prayers for the Protestant schools in Latin America.

Have a brief paper showing some of the superstitions and idolatrous practices of the Roman Catholic Church in these countries.

Sing, " Light of the world."

Have written upon the blackboard, or a sheet of paper, a prayer for spirit-emancipation, and ask all to join in it.

Let some one inform himself as to religious conditions and needs in the new Republic of Panama and the Canal Zone, and speak briefly.

Sing, " Salvation, O the joyful sound!"

Prayer for the Spirit of God upon all mission-

aries, teachers, and native Christians in Latin America.

Offering.

Closing invocation.

"Protestant Missions in South America," Beach; "Latin America," Brown.

Home Missions: Our Immigrant Population

Sing, "My Country, 'tis of thee," "Throw out the life line."

Read, Eph. 2 : 13–19 (let seven persons each recite a verse).

Prayer that the nation may be given power to assimilate its new material.

Have some one prepared who will give briefly statistics of foreign immigration and the percentage of foreign population (post figures on blackboard).

Sing, "Come, ye that love the Lord, and let your joys be known."

A season of prayers for the Italians, the Jews, the Scandinavians, the Irish, the English-speaking, the Syrian, and other foreigners who make up the bulk of our million immigrants a year.

A map showing the distribution of the immigrants, using red dots for Roman Catholics, green for Jews, black for Greek Catholics, and yellow for Protestants.

A brief description of missionary work at the landing-places of immigrants.

A crisp statement of the needs in congested cities and far western communities.

Sing, " Salvation, O the joyful sound ! "

Call for ten sentence prayers for more labourers who can preach to these people in their native tongue.

Sing, " Sow in the morn thy seed."

A list of tracts and versions of the Bible or parts of it, suitable for distribution among foreigners.

Prayers for the teachers in the public schools in which the immigrants' children are taught.

A ten-minute open parliament in which each one is expected to contribute some condensed, interesting information about the immigrants.

Sing, " The star-spangled banner."

Closing sentence prayers that we may be true Christian brothers to the immigrant and his children.

Offering.

The doxology.

" Our Country," Josiah Strong; " Problems of American Civilization."

The Chinese in America

Opening song, " Sow in the morn thy seed," " Work, for the night is coming."

Read, Matt. 25 : 31–46.

Prayer that we may not neglect the heathen God sends to us.

A condensed word-picture of Chinatown, New York.

One-minute account of successful Chinese churches in this country.

A word on the reflex influence of converted Chinamen upon missions in their own country.

Sing, " What a Friend we have in Jesus."

Prayers for the Chinese converts, that they may withstand persecution.

A description of Chinese Sunday-school classes.

What we may do for our laundrymen.

Leader's suggestions.

Sing, " Take my life and let it be."

Offering.

Closing prayer.

Any of the leading denominational boards of missions can furnish leaflets on this work.

The Indians

Sing, " Just as I am, without one plea," " God loved the world of sinners lost."

Read, Ps. 67 : 1–7.

Prayer that we may be just and brotherly towards the Indian.

An outline map having the number and location of the Indians shown by red wigwams, one for every thousand or fraction thereof. (Indian costumes and curios might be made to add piquancy to this meeting.)

A brief description of the various missions and schools among Indians. (Indicated on the map by black arrows.)

Sing, "There is a fountain filled with blood."

A season of prayers for the missionaries and teachers among the Indians.

If possible to secure it, have a letter read from the National Indian Rights Association.

Cut cards in the shape of tomahawks and bows, and write on them quotations or scripture verses for the very youngest attendants on the meeting.

Sing, "We praise Thee, O God."

Offering.

Closing prayer.

"Ten Years of Missionary Work Among the Indians," Congregational House; "A Century of Dishonour," Roberts Bros., Boston.

Alaska

Sing, "Go, preach My holy gospel."

Read, Luke 8 : 5–15.

Pray for God's Spirit in the meeting.

If possible, secure some one who has taken a trip to Alaska to tell briefly of life there.

Have a two-minute paper on the Indians and Eskimo.

Sing, "Bear the message onward."

A season of prayers for the mining-camps, the Indians, the Eskimo.

A rapid-fire survey of missions in Alaska.

A description of the long night in miners' camps.

Sing, "All people that on earth do dwell."

Offering (books and papers for reading-rooms, as well as money).

Closing prayer (repeat in unison softly the Lord's Prayer).

Get leaflets from your denominational missionary board. "Alaska," by Sheldon Jackson, D.D.

The Negro

Read, Ps. 116 : 16–19.

Sing, "Swing low, sweet chariot" (or some of the familiar jubilee songs).

A number of prayers that the "race problem" may be solved through the enlightenment of the Spirit.

Appoint half a dozen, each of whom is to tell of one prominent school for Negroes; like Tuskeegee, Fiske, Hampton, etc.

Sing, "Lord bless and pity us."

Have a brief reading from Booker T. Washington's "Up From Slavery."

"Thumb-nail" sketches of Negro cabins, religious meetings, farming, etc., by those who have seen them in the South.

Prayers for teachers and workers among the Negroes.

Sing, "The battle hymn of the Republic."

Offering.

Closing prayer.

The mission boards doing work in the South will furnish literature.

A Stereopticon Meeting With City Missions

Where practicable to secure the use of a stereopticon, it will be found immensely profitable to throw on a screen some pictures of slum life in the foreign quarter of a large city. T. H. McAllister, 49 Nassau St., New York, has a set of slides entitled, "The Dark Side of New York," from his catalogue of which suitable selections could be made. They can be rented for five cents each a night, plus transportation. The Merrimac Street Mission, Boston, gives such a stereopticon exhibit of rescue mission work, for an offering for its work. Missions in other cities may do likewise.

Sing, "Christ receiveth sinful men."

Let two persons recite in succession the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, Luke 15.

Prayer that our cities may triumph over the

tremendous peril of rapid growth of godless people.

Show pictures of the crowded tenements and home life.

Sing (from the screen), " Jesus saves."

Ask for sentence prayers that American ideals of home life may be instilled rapidly into these people.

Show pictures illustrating the street life of the children—" playing crap," " young toughs," " little mothers," etc.

Sing, " Gather them into the fold."

Ask for prayers for the children of the slums.

Have selections read from Jacob Riis's " The Making of an American." " How the Other Half Lives," " The Battle of the Slums," showing pictures that will illustrate the selections, particularly the city playgrounds, the missions, social settlement houses, etc.

Sing, " Rescue the perishing."

Pray for the city missions, mentioning well-known ones by name.

Show pictures of the fresh-air work among children.

If possible let the offering consist, in part, of flowers for flower missions in some city.

Close with Aaronic benediction in concert.

Jacob Riis's books already referred to; " Americans in Process," Woods; report of your nearest city mission.

XX

SUGGESTIVE PLANS FOR PRAYER-MEETINGS

1. *Two-Minute Introductory Essays.*—A very good way to get the theme of the meeting before the congregation in a fresh way, especially if the minister has invariably introduced it by a little sermon, is to arrange for a number of two-minute essays. Get the writers to promise to time their essays beforehand, and keep them strictly within the two-minute limit. From three to five such essays may be used, each on a different phase of the subject.

Let the leader announce the general subject, and the sub-topics. Let each essayist announce his sub-topic before he begins to read. For example, suppose that the prayer-meeting theme is, "Faithfulness to Duty." Get a young business man to write an essay on, "The Christian business man's ideal of faithfulness." Get some wise mother to write on, "The housewife's ideal of faithfulness." Secure some public official who will tell what, "A faithful Christian office-holder is." If there are students old enough, have one describe, "The faithful Christian student," etc.

These essays are designed solely to open the

subject for prayer and discussion, and not to be so exhaustive as to close it. Even if the essays fail of the main purpose, the sub-topics cannot help being suggestive, and the fact of having enlisted so many new voices in the meeting will be a distinct gain.

2. *A Banner Prayer-Meeting.*—Any prayer-meeting theme which deals with the conflict between good and evil may be treated in the following manner:—Hang in the front of the room a black banner, to represent the cause of evil, and a white banner with a red cross in the centre to stand for the cause of righteousness. These may be four feet by two and a half.

Make a number of similar smaller paper flags, say four inches long by two and a half wide. Distribute these among those whom you select to take the leading parts. Write on each of the black banners, in white, the name of one of the forces of evil against which the church must wage war; as, intemperance, money-greed, racial prejudice, lust, bad literature, false religions, etc.

Each one holding a banner will tell in a minute how the evil force that his banner represents works injury in society.

Eph. 6: 10–18 may be read as a Scripture lesson. Let the hymns be in keeping—"Onward, Christian soldiers!" "The son of God goes forth to war," "Yield not to temptation," "Am I a soldier of the cross?" Luther's battle hymn.

On the white banners write the names of the forces in this conflict that make for righteousness:—the gospel, Christian song, prayer, good literature, the Sunday-school, the temperance forces, evangelism, etc. Treat them in the same way as the others.

As each force, on either side, is presented in this way, let a printed slip containing the force spoken of, or the smaller banner, be pinned to the large banner in front to which it belongs. Be sure to close with a hopeful, optimistic ring, in a song, or prayer, or word of exhortation, or prophecy.

3. *A Biographical Prayer-Meeting.*—Such a theme as, "Gaining by losing" (Mark 10: 28–30), lends itself readily to the biographical plan. Distribute among picked members (not picked for their readiness to talk, but sometimes for the opposite reason) the names of such Biblical characters as: Peter, Matthew, Zaccheus, Stephen, the Samaritan woman, the Philippian slave girl, Paul, Nicodemus, etc. Ask those to whom they are assigned to tell what they lost and what they gained by accepting Christ. It should be done very briefly. Better limit each to a certain number of words—fifty—and ask them to write their thoughts out and count the words.

Sing some such hymn as "All for Jesus," or, "Take my life and let it be."

Have a series of prayers for the kind of conse-

cration that was exemplified by the characters just discussed.

Next take some of the great characters prominent in the reforms of the world: as, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Frances Willard, Wilberforce, Cromwell, Garrison, etc., and have them subjected to the same test.

Sing, "The battle hymn of the Republic," or, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus."

Have another season of prayers, asking that no one present may hesitate to make the same choice for righteousness and humanity.

Then take half a dozen great missionaries:— Carey, Mackay, Whitman, Paton, Hannington, Livingstone, and Grenfell, and ask the same question of them, the answer coming from those selected and prepared.

The leader may make the application strong and pointed, and such a review of the chief witnesses for Christ can but be inspiring.

4. *The "Slip" Method.*—For such a theme as, "How to grow strong" (Judges 16: 20–30), this method may be profitable: Write on half a dozen slips of paper the following request:— "Please come to the meeting next week prepared to name one thing that will help a person to grow spiritually strong, and tell how it is to be obtained."

On six other slips of paper write a request that six things be mentioned that weaken the

soul, and suggestions for eliminating them from the life.

At the opening of the meeting, let the leader sketch very briefly the Bible story of Samson. The ten verses of Scripture might be put on ten slips of paper (or references to them) for ten other persons to read prior to this.

Sing in opening, one hymn on strength through the word of God, one on strength through prayer, and one on strength through the Holy Spirit.

Then call for the twelve contributions, alternating between the two lists. Arrange with each participant beforehand as to the length of his remarks—a limit of a minute would be proper.

After the twelve invited have expressed themselves, invite any present to add to what has been set forth, and always, in any planned meeting, leave perfect freedom and time for participation for any who do not care to fall in with the plan, but prefer to take part in a more general way.

5. *An "Observation" Meeting.*—Have an announcement made at the previous meeting that each attendant is requested to keep his eyes open during the week and observe how Christianity actually is practiced. Each one should come prepared to tell one instance which he has observed of Christian principles reduced to actual practice. Emphasize the fact, in the announcement, that the deed observed and reported need

not necessarily be anything great—a single helpful word, a thoughtful act, an unselfish kindness, an unusual courtesy prompted by Christian feeling, a letter expressing some Christian regard, a straightforward business dealing in the midst of temptation to stretch the truth or gain an end by deceit, a public policy that cost the doer something—only it should be something that was personally observed, and not something read or learned by hearsay.

A good Scripture lesson for this meeting is 1 John 3: 14–18. Sing, "Scatter seeds of kindness," "Let the lower lights be burning," "Blest be the tie that binds," "Pass it on," etc.

The leader should "load up" with instances of brotherly kindness, fidelity to duty, conscientious work, unselfish seeking for God's glory, and if there is any disposition to carp or tell instances of the inconsistencies of man, he should keep the meeting on the right track by drawing on his fund of incidents.

6. *A Question-and-Answer Meeting.*—Have a request made at the previous meeting that each one who comes next week prepare a question in writing. The theme may be the church covenant or vow, the church confession of faith, the organization of the local church and the work of its various departments and committees, the history of the denomination, the authorship, authenticity, time of writing, and evidences of inspiration of

the books of the Bible, special work for slum boys and girls, or any subject that lends itself to the question-box method.

It is better to request that the questions be sent by mail, or be brought in person to the leader as early in the week as possible, so that he may have time to refer the questions to others who will look up the answers, or to look up the answers himself. Preferably, there should be a large committee on answering the questions.

One of this committee may be selected to read the questions, calling upon those who have agreed to answer. Nothing is more calculated to stir up an interest in the entire community over the prayer-meeting than this method. Seasons of prayer should be held over some of the most perplexing questions.

This question-box should not take so much time that there will not be room for spontaneous testimonies and prayers that are suggested by none of the questions.

7. *An "In His Steps" Meeting.*—Let the leader draw on the blackboard or a large sheet of paper an enlarged facsimile of the cover-page design of Mr. Sheldon's well-known book, "In His Steps." The number of steps may be increased so as to give more room for the play of the mental activities of those who take part.

Read as the opening Scripture, Col. 2: 6, 7; Gal. 5: 16–26.

Sing such hymns as "Trust and obey," "Anywhere with Jesus," "One more day's work for Jesus," "Nearer, my God, to Thee."

Have suitable extracts read from the book—paragraphs that illustrate the title.

Assign beforehand the steps to some who are willing to tell briefly, in a practical way, each of one step that we may take with Him. For example, one may tell how to walk with Him in the beginning of the day, by spending a few moments alone with Him and His word. Another may tell how a step can be taken with Him by speaking a personal word for Him to another on the way to business. A third may suggest that it would be a step taken with Jesus to deny one's self something during the day and give the saving to missions, and still another might think of making up some difference with one with whom we had quarrelled, etc.

Each of these suggestions should be written in one of the steps on the blackboard, until each step has been used. Nothing should be written that is not exemplified in the life of our Lord, and the leader should be ready with a number of instances to fill in any steps that may be left after all have spoken who will.

8. *An Evening With Paul.*—It may as well be an evening with John, or with James, or with Moses, or David. The same plan will answer for all.

A plan followed by Rev. C. M. Southgate, of Auburndale, Mass., was as follows: He divided the blackboard into four columns. Over the first he wrote, "Paul's Qualifications," over the second, "Paul's Opportunities," over the third, "Paul's Achievements," and over the fourth, "Paul's Rewards." He asked the congregation to suggest what should be written under each of these heads, and soon had the columns filled. As he proceeded, the pastor underscored those features of Paul's life that we might hope to imitate.

An interesting feature of an evening with Paul, or any other Bible writer, would be a rapid-fire of favourite quotations, by the congregation, from the writings of the author used as the subject.

Another capital feature would be the announcement of hymns that had been suggested or inspired by some of his writings. These might be sung, as far as possible.

Still another profitable exercise would be making a list of books that have been written upon the Scriptures of this author. Possibly the minister might profitably spend half a day preparing such a list, which might, in turn, set many of his congregation to reading religious books, especially if he emphasized the most attractive, and passed quickly over the dry, theological works.

9. *A "Confession-Box" Meeting.*—Let the theme be, "Tempted in all points like as we

are," and the Scripture reading, Heb. 4: 11–16. Have it read by six different persons, a verse each.

Ask, the week before, that each one bring a written, unsigned testimony regarding definite temptations out of which Christ has helped those confessing. These should be read in the meeting.

Make the opening song service one on temptation.

Arrange with persons representing different callings in life (mechanic, housewife, teacher, public official, etc.), to write on their papers of the temptations peculiar to their callings.

The leader, in his opening talk, should present Christ's temptations and the purpose of them as related to ours.

Opportunity should be given in the meeting for those having friends exposed to special temptation, to present them, anonymously if preferred, for the prayers of those assembled.

The Bible promises to the tempted should be looked up and placed in the hands of a number of persons, to be quoted in the meeting at the most effective time.

If there is a good reader among the prayer-meeting attendants, it would be well to have Mrs. Sangster's beautiful poem, "Overcometh," recited.

10. *A "Halleluia" Meeting.*—Let the theme

be "Christianity compared with other religions." Read, Acts 17 : 22–31.

A number of the charts in Dorchester's "The Problem of Religious Progress," may be enlarged, making the scale a foot for an inch. For example, use a large square marked into smaller squares to show the relative numerical standing of Christianity and other religions. Colour the squares that represent Christianity one colour, Mohammedanism, another colour, Buddhism another, etc. Another chart that should be used is that showing the gain of Christianity by centuries.

To compare the social life of Christendom and the rest of the world, have some women appointed to contrast the condition of woman in Turkey, and China, and America. Have several older children prepared to read or recite something showing the different lots of the children in heathen and Christian lands.

Let the Sunday-school teachers make the comparison between the religious teachings of Christianity and other religions, on the blackboard. Under the head "Christianity," let one write "the Beatitudes," "the Golden Rule," the "Suffer little children," etc. Under other heads let others write the distinguishing teachings of other religions: religious caste, crocodile worship, foot-binding, fetichism, polygamy, human sacrifices, etc.

After each division of this comparison, sing some of the most triumphant hymns in the song books, and have prayers of thanksgiving

The leader should see that the tone of the meeting is jubilant, full of praise, and it should be clinched with some earnest expression of our obligation to pass the benefits of Christianity on to the others.

11. *A First Voters' Service.*—For this service read Acts 22: 25–28; Rom. 13: 1–8. Sing patriotic hymns: "America," "The battle hymn of the Republic," "The star spangled banner," "Onward, Christian soldiers," etc.

The object should be to gather in the church on this evening as many as possible of those who will cast their first ballot at the next election, and to give to their induction into citizenship something of religious impressiveness and sacredness. They should be sent special invitations, and the meeting might be given a decidedly patriotic tinge by inviting also, the G. A. R. post, if there is one, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and any other patriotic order.

There may be several brief addresses covering such points as:

(1) What American citizenship has cost.
(2) Some menaces to our free institutions.
(3) Some qualifications needed in citizens.

(4) Some improvements needed in exercising the elective franchise.

Between each of these have prayers and songs. Do not make it too heavy, and follow the more formal exercises with a social and light refreshments.

Many a young voter who proves careless or venal in exercising his high privilege, might get a higher ideal of citizenship from such a meeting, rightly conducted.

12. *A "My Own Bible" Meeting.*—Few Christians realize the great blessing of personal ownership of the Bible, as compared with the days when few owned Bibles. One requisite of this meeting should be that each bring and use his own Bible. Use as the Scripture lesson, 2 Tim. 3: 14–17.

If possible, have a large Bible, with an antiquated look, chained to the desk, as a reminder of the time when the Word of God was chained, to the laity. The leader should briefly allude to that time, and tell of some of the difficulties that men underwent, and some of the fabulous prices they paid to get Bibles.

Ask each one to tell of one form of help his own Bible is to him.

A Sunday-school teacher may speak of the various helps in the back of the Bible, and how they aid in preparing the lesson.

Another may be prepared to tell of the marginal readings, and how they throw light on the texts.

Still another may refer to the references on the margin, and their usefulness in studying the Bible.

Another may exhibit a Bible with a thumb index, and tell how it has saved time, and so helped to a more intimate knowledge of the Word.

In this way various features of "My own Bible" may be dwelt upon, that all do not, perhaps, appreciate as much as they might. Have songs and prayers between these features, and close with an earnest plea for a larger and more intelligent use of the Bible, indicating some ways in which it is needed in your community.

XXI

PLANS FOR SPECIAL DAYS

1. *Plan for a New Year Meeting.*—Hang up a large wall calendar, with a pad having a leaf for every week, or month. Tear these off, leaving only the cardboard back. A week before the meeting distribute these leaves among persons who will promise to fill them out with brief statements of some good work they would like to see done in the church during the coming year. Perhaps the heads of departments, as Sunday-school, Christian Endeavour, Epworth League, etc., and the chairman of committees would be the best persons.

Gather up these suggestions and have them read aloud in the meeting, without the names of the writers. These should not be known even to the leader; the anonymous character of the suggestions will encourage greater freedom in writing.

After the suggestions have been read, perhaps a half dozen at a time, pause and ask for brief prayers that each one read may be brought to pass during the year. At the close announce that these suggestions for new work for the coming year will be replaced on the calendar pad,

and that it will remain on the wall of the church, and the suggestions that are deemed practical by the pastor and his advisors will constitute the programme for the next year's activities, the replaced leaves serving as a weekly or monthly reminder of what the church purposed to do, in the beginning of the year.

2. *A Prayer-Meeting to Precede Decision Day.* —Invite the lookout committee of the young people's society, the teachers of the Sunday-school, the junior superintendent, parents, and any others interested, to bring to the meeting the names of those whom they wish to see decide for Christ on the Sunday named as "Decision Day" for the Sunday-school and young people's society, which is often the first Sunday in February.

These names need not be mentioned in public, but each one may make a private statement to the leader of the number for whom he or she wishes prayers offered, or may make the statement publicly. Take first the names from the Sunday-school teachers; after the leader has made a statement as to the number for whom prayers are to be asked, either by classes, or collectively, as he thinks best, let there be a season of prayer, that these may be led to decide before or on the day appointed as Decision Day.

Take the same course with the names offered by the lookout committee of the young people's society, the Junior superintendent, and with those

offered by parents, or others. For that especial meeting have the chorister of the church or Sunday-school, or the superintendent of the Juniors, prepare a special chorus of children's voices to sing some songs, "The sweet story of old," "Jesus loves me, this I know," and "I will follow Thee, my Saviour." It will secure the presence of many of the very ones for whom prayers are offered, and cannot fail to impress them.

Have an after-meeting for any of the children who wish to stay and counsel with the pastor, but especially for the teachers, Endeavour workers, and parents interested, to make sure that they are ready to follow up their prayers with personal words before Decision Day.

3. *Plan for an Easter Prayer-Meeting.*—Use a large wooden cross, or one drawn upon the blackboard, to symbolize death, and a potted lily in bloom to symbolize life.

Read for a Scripture lesson, Eph. 2 : 1–10.

Select in advance five persons, who shall show by a consecutive Bible-reading some of the things to which we must die on the cross, in order to be "risen with Christ":

(1) Rom. 6 : 2.
(2) 1 Peter 2 : 24.
(3) Eph. 4 : 22.
(4) Col. 3 : 9.
(5) Gal. 5 : 24; 2 : 20.

As these Scripture passages are read in the

meeting, have the cards on which they were written brought forward and pinned to the cross.

Sing, " Moment by moment."

Have a season of prayer that sin may die out of every life, and all sinful desire be gone.

Then use another Bible-reading : —

(1) Rom. 8 : 12.
(2) Eph. 4 : 24.
(3) Col. 3 : 10.
(4) 2 Cor. 5 : 17.
(5) Gal. 6 : 15.

These are to show the things to which we must become alive. Let each be represented by a flower, a bunch of pussy willows, a sprig of green, etc., which, as fast as the Scripture is read, may be grouped around the lily, the symbol of life divine.

4. *Plan for a Prayer-Meeting for the Sunday-School.*—Many churches set apart at least one prayer-meeting of the year for special prayer for the Sunday-school. Unusual effort should be made to have all the officers and teachers of the school present, and as many of the older scholars as possible.

Sing some of the hymns familiar to the Sunday-school. Use a responsive reading so that all may have a part in the meeting. Ask the superintendent of the school, and the superintendent of the Intermediate Department, if there is one, and other departments, to sit on the platform

with the leader, and have some part in leading the meeting.

Sing such songs as, "Our lives to Christ we dedicate," "Scatter cheering words," "Forward go," "What are you doing for Jesus?" "All and always for the King," "Pressing forward, reaching forward," "Oh, Jesus, I have promised."

Have a song or two, and then a season of prayer for the superintendent, and assistant superintendents if there be any. Ask the deacons or elders or some of the veterans of the church to pray for them.

Have another song, and then a season of prayer for the teachers, led by the superintendent. If any of the teachers feel impressed to speak of spiritual needs, or physical needs, in their work, encourage that. Sometimes the best praying a church could do for its Sunday-school would be to buy it a new set of maps, or a new library.

Have another song, and then a season of special prayer for the Primary Department. If there is a Cradle roll, include that.

Sing again, and then remember the Home Department, if there be one. Try to have some cheering report about its work—about all the departments.

In some churches such a prayer-meeting is used as an occasion for the church to get acquainted with the working force of the Sunday-school. The officers and teachers are asked to

stand in a semicircle in front of the congregation, where all may see them, and the list of names is called from right to left.

5. *Plan for a Temperance Meeting.*—Scripture lesson: Daniel 1: 8–20.

A Bible reading to be given in the meeting by five persons: —

(1) The corrupting power of intemperance.—Prov. 20: 1; 23: 29–32; Isa. 5: 22; 28: 7; Dan. 5: 1–4, 23.

(2) The curbing of the lower nature.—Num. 6: 1–4; Jer. 35: 5, 6; Rom. 6: 11–13; 1 Cor. 9: 26, 27; Gal. 5: 24.

(3) Abstinence for others' sake.—Lev. 10: 8–11; Prov. 31: 4, 5; Rom. 14: 21; 1 Cor. 8: 9, 13; Heb. 12: 13.

(4) Temperate in all things.—1 Cor. 9: 25; Phil. 4: 11, 12; 1 Thess. 5: 22; Tit. 1: 7, 8; 1 Pet. 2: 11, 12.

(5) The triumph of the spiritual nature.—Rom. 14: 17; 2 Cor. 10: 3–5; Gal. 5: 22, 23; Eph. 5: 18; 2 Pet. 1: 4–8.

Enlist several persons each to tell briefly of one life that has been lived according to a noble purpose, and has uplifted others; as John B. Gough, Frances Willard, Father Mathews, etc.

On the blackboard, or a large sheet of paper, place before the meeting a list of influences that tend to break down temperance teachings and purposes. Let the list be suggested, as far as

possible, by those in the meeting, possibly some ones engaged beforehand. You ought to get such a list as: the treating practice, inherited tendencies, the use of wine and brandy in cooking, the use of alcohol as a tonic, open saloons, wine-bibbers in public office, fermented communion wine, etc.

Have it announced the week previous that each one is requested to watch the papers and glean from them accounts of the mischief wrought by strong drink, and give an abstract in this meeting.

Sing: "Dare to be a Daniel," "Yield not to temptation," "The clean heart," "Give courage, Lord," "A mighty fortress is our God."

6. *Plan for a Fourth of July Meeting.*—Cover the desk or table used by the leader with the Stars and Stripes. Decorate the walls and ceiling of the room with bunting in the national colours—crêpe paper will answer.

Read, Prov. 14: 34; Deut. 6: 10–13.

Sing such songs as: "Great King of nations," "O Lord of hosts, Almighty King," "God bless our native land," "God of our fathers," "Fair freedom's land," "Bless this our land," "The battle hymn of the Republic," and "America."

Have a good reader read or declaim Kipling's poem, "The Recessional."

Get in writing, from public men whom you know, expressions regarding the essentials of

national prosperity. Have these read in the meeting. Ask the editor of your local paper, several prominent business men, the president of the W. C. T. U., the president of your nearest college or academy, and others identified with public matters, to answer each some specific question related to national prosperity; as, what does the office-holder need? What does the business man need? What do the reform movements need? etc.

After each of these remarks have been read or delivered have a season of prayer: 1. For the president and all in authority. 2. For the army and navy. 3. For the business interests of the country. 4. For the reforms that need to be worked out. 5. For the voters of the land. 6. For the schools. 7. For the children.

7. *Plan for a Thanksgiving Meeting.*—Decorate the room with cornstalks with the ears hanging on, partly husked, with rows of apples, sheaves of wheat, pumpkins, squashes, and all the more showy products of the later harvests that can be had. City and town churches can usually secure these of the market-man.

Read as a Scripture lesson, Psa. 147 : 1–20.

Sing such hymns as: "God hath given us the harvest," "Come, Christian youths and maidens," "We plough the fields," "A gladsome hymn," "God eternal, mighty King," "Lord, with glow-

ing heart," "Crown Him with many crowns," "Oh, could I speak the matchless worth."

Appoint beforehand, five elderly persons to tell what old people have for which to be especially thankful in these days: in comforts, in health-saving things, in the social life, in church privileges, in temporalities.

Appoint in like manner five young persons to tell what especial blessings these times bring to young people: in educational advantages, in opportunities for Christian service, in national progress, in world-fellowship, and in business opportunities.

Have the overseer of the poor, or the charity visitors, or some one qualified, tell of the needs of the poor in the community, and arrange that the vegetables and an offering of money shall go to relieve their needs, or fill a box or barrel for some home missionary's family.

Have the Thanksgiving proclamation read, and make the sentiment of the meeting lend itself to stimulating a religious observance of the coming Thanksgiving day, provided the prayer-meeting anticipates that day.

8. *A Plan for a Christmas Prayer-Meeting.*— Let the leader print on the blackboard, or a large sheet of paper, in a vertical column on the left-hand side, the words "Merry Christmas," all in capital letters.

Ask a number of persons in advance to come

prepared to give, as their contribution to the meeting, the name of one characteristic that Christmas should have in order to be a "Merry Christmas." The adjectives should begin with one of the letters of the words "Merry Christmas."

For example, one may say that it should be a *self-denying* Christmas. Immediately write this after the capital S. Another may say, "It must be a *thoughtful* Christmas." Write this after "T," enlarging upon each suggestion. Some letters will have more than one adjective, but the capitals may be written far enough apart to make room for writing more than one suggestion. No suggestions may be made for some letters in the words; in which case the leader will of course be provided with a complete list from which he can supply deficiencies. Some one may suggest a hymn that just fits in after one of the letters. That would be a good time to sing the hymn. Another suggestion may be a verse of Scripture, which all should find and read together.

This exercise should not take more than fifteen minutes of the meeting, leaving the remainder of the time for the usual participation; but it will likely be found that the exercise has been so suggestive that the rest of the time will be filled promptly and profitably.

XXII

OPEN-AIR, AND SPECIAL PRAYER-MEETINGS

Prayer-meetings on the street, the church lawn, and other open-air spaces, and in the factory, the jail, street-car barn, police and fire engine stations, and other similar places, are growing in favour. The young people, especially, are forward in this mode of worship.

The open-air prayer-meeting would be a distinct gain to many churches, during the hot summer months. Often we hear the cry, "Back to Christ!" this would be going "back to Christ," for His meetings were in the open-air. Such meetings would conduce to the comfort of those that attend, for most prayer-meeting rooms, when artificially lighted, on a hot summer evening, are uncomfortable. Many would attend a prayer-meeting in the open-air, or in a tent, who would not go to the church. People will sit at their doors and listen to singing and prayers, who would not take the trouble to dress and go to a church prayer-meeting in the church. But the purpose here is not so much to make an argument in favour of open-air, tent, and similar prayer-meetings, as to give some practical suggestions for making the most of such meetings,

when they are held. It is safe to say that they will grow in favour more and more.

1. As to the place. The Rev. William Patterson, D. D., pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, gives the following advice for open-air meetings, that will be as applicable to a prayer-meeting, as to an evangelistic meeting (though one ought to apologize for making the distinction). He says:—"Get a wall back of you as a sounding-board. Don't form in a circle; get your audience in a compact body. It will lessen disturbance. Don't let a road or a street divide your audience, or any other obstacle come between you and your hearers." To this might be added: Keep as far away as possible from passing street-cars, wagons, or noises that will drown the speaker's or singers' voices. When there is a disturbance, don't try to talk or pray; sing.

2. The singing. Dr. Patterson says again, "The singing must be up-to-date, something catchy, and not old-fashioned." By "old-fashioned" he probably means hackneyed. Songs certainly must be popular. The Central Union Mission, Washington, D. C., in the meetings held from its gospel wagon, distributes the songs on a printed sheet, interspersing the songs with interesting religious reading, and thus accomplishing a twofold object.

A good orchestra is a great help in a meeting

of this kind, or, where an orchestra is not at command, a cornetist with the organ makes a splendid leading tone. A "baby" organ, or one that can be folded and carried like a suit-case, is a valuable auxiliary. These little organs have powerful tones. A suggestion worth noting is, sing a great deal, and sing to make as much volume of sound as possible. Such singing advertises the meeting. It is heard when nothing else can be heard, and the gospel sung over and over again cannot but have lasting fruit, if everything else fails.

3. About the speakers or leader. The speaker should be elevated above the people. Many of those who lead meetings on the Charles Street Mall of the Boston Common, on Sunday afternoons, carry a box on which to stand. Dr. Patterson says, "I received a degree down in Boston. It was, 'S. B. D. D.' (Soap Box Devil Driver). Often an empty beer-keg will serve as a platform, and will come in handy as an illustration of keeping Satan and his devices under your feet. But be courteous with your audience. Make no discrimination in creeds. Do not answer questions. Turn them off; for they distract attention. Once a man asked me, 'Where did Cain get his wife?' I told him not to be like some men who got into trouble by paying too much attention to other men's wives."

Make no long addresses, and allow none. Let

everything be short, sharp, and to the point. A sentence each from many is better than a tedious harangue from one. Don't make the mistake of thinking, because it is a religious service, you must look solemn. Look bright and happy. Smile when you speak. Encourage those with you to look pleasant, as though you were enjoying the service. If you can't enjoy it, how can you expect to make others? The deaf woman in church, who could only "Smile 'em in and smile 'em out," might preach to many of us, whose faces give the impression of suffering from toothache, rather than of enjoying a delightful service.

4. Prayer-meetings in prisons, hospitals, homes, shops, missions. More and more is the church recognizing its obligation to carry religious privileges to those deprived of them in the ordinary form. Perhaps it is natural that the young people's society should lead in supplying such places as those named above with weekly, or at least, monthly services. The time will come when no prison, jail, almshouse, home for the aged, home for children, hospital, fire-engine house, police station, army barracks, training ship, receiving ship, warship, merchant marine vessel, canal boat, street-car barn, or any such place, will be without its regular ministry of song and prayer, through the willing services of the young people and the older Christians. An ideal

which every church might well keep before it is this, "No gospel privilege for ourselves without some service to others in seeing that they have gospel privileges." This is the real divine service. What we usually call a "divine service," going to church twice or three times a week to get something for ourselves, may be a selfish dissipation. Churches that are dying of religious dyspepsia would get a new lease of life if they bestirred themselves to give the gospel to the needy.

It is easy to see that when the churches more seriously take up the task of seeing that all these neglected corners have a chance to enjoy divine worship, the question of retaining the young men, and of keeping a grip on the male element, will be in a hopeful way of solution. This kind of unselfish service appeals to men. It strikes a note of chivalry and lofty humanitarianism to which men are wont to respond. It makes them feel that there is really some fighting, and they want to be in it.

In a meeting in a prison or jail, it will be hard for those from the church not to speak in a patronizing tone, and remind their audience that they are of a different class from themselves. It is better, always to put ourselves all in one class, to speak of ourselves as sinners, irretrievably lost but for the grace of God. In selecting songs, the same error needs to be guarded against.

Don't use songs that speak of prisoners. Don't think that you have to remind them in any way that they are prisoners, though that is not always objectionable, if the proper tact and sympathy are used.

The same caution needs to be observed in street meetings, and in rescue missions. By the time the parable of the Prodigal Son has been rammed down the throats of an audience of men and woman gathered off the street, three or four times a week, they are nauseated with it. You would be too, were you in their position. No one likes to be put in a class by himself, whether it is in a reform school for girls, a sailors' bethel, or the Tombs. Neither is it necessary. Whatever our culture, or social standing, we are all men subject to temptation, and have spiritual needs much alike. There is always the common ground of dependency upon a common Saviour. We must try to put ourselves in the other man's place, and realize how we should feel if some one assumed a superior tone, and violated all the common courtesies, in an effort to do us good without trying to understand us.

5. The length of such meetings. As a rule they should be shorter than the prayer-meeting you would hold in your own church. If you are holding a shop meeting, during the noon lunch hour, close in good time to let the men get to their places after the whistle blows, or

your welcome next time will be abridged. In holding meetings on men-of-war, remember that everything goes by strict, military rules, and that you embarrass the men and lose caste with the officers if you prolong your meeting.

Don't go away without a hearty handshake, man with man, into which all the brotherliness you know how to put shall be expressed. The propriety of young girls shaking hands promiscuously with street loafers, and prisoners, is questionable.

The writer of this has assisted in holding prayer-meetings in almost all of the conditions specified above, and has been connected with a rescue mission in which the Christians of more than forty churches work, and he can testify that such work requires specializing, but that no prayer-meetings give the church more healthy and vigorous heart-throbs, than the prayer-meetings the church holds away from the church portals.

APPENDIX

SUGGESTED PRAYER-MEETING TOPICS FOR A YEAR

January

Evidences that God is with us.—Jude 20–25; John 14: 16–21.

Week-of-prayer topics, as published in the religious press.

Traits and deeds that make us godlike.—Heb. 1: 1–8; John 17: 1–8.

How men overcome temptation.—1 Sam. 24: 1–15. (Optional topic: Indian Missions. See missionary programmes.)

February

How we may become interested in personal evangelism.—Rom. 1: 13–16; Acts 8: 26–31.

A revival of religion in the family.—Gen. 8: 20–9: 1.

Grace to do hard service.—Josh. 14: 6–15; Heb. 12: 1–4.

Prayer for god-fearing rulers and officials.—1 Chron. 29: 10–17. (Optional topic: Island Missions.)

March

Christianity and the square deal.—Isa. 33: 15–18; Col. 3: 22–25.

How Abraham's life touches mine.—Heb. 11: 8–19.

For what success shall we pray?—Ps. 12: 1–8; 15: 1–5.

How to give outward expression to inward spiritual life.—Rom. 10: 8–13. (Optional topic: Missions among the Afro-Americans.)

April

Jesus' Sabbath-keeping, and ours.—Luke 4: 16–24.

Jacob, the changed man.—Gen. 25: 31–34; 32: 24–32.

Is our reading Christian?—Prov. 8: 1–21; Acts 8: 26–40.

Do we use prayer enough? Why not?—Acts 10: 1–6. (Optional topic: Missions in Asia. Alternate topics for Passion Week and Easter, according to the dates on which these come: How may we be crucified with Christ?—Rom. 6: 6; Gal. 2: 20. How show that we have risen with Christ?—Col. 3: 1–4.)

May

The things that really satisfy.—Prov. 14: 1–14; 1 Tim. 6: 1–8. (Optional topic: Prayer for the General Assembly, Conference, Synod,

or body of the church, whatever its name. Most of these general bodies meet in May.)

Josephs needed to-day.—Gen. 39: 1–41: 46.

How the birds teach us tuneful praise to God. —Ps. 84: 1–12.

The prayer cure for our trivial faults.—2 Cor. 13: 10–14; Jas. 4: 13–17; Rom. 1: 30–32.

My use of God's property.—1 Cor. 4: 2; 16: 1–3.

June

Enjoying Christ's daily companionship.—John 17: 20–26.

Our influence over younger ones.—Prov. 31: 10–31; Prov. 6: 20–22.

The poor slaves of habit and appetite.—John 8: 31–36; Acts 16: 16–18.

Helping unpopular reforms.—Ex. 3: 1–10.

What do I get from church membership?—Ps. 87: 1–7. (Optional topic: Missions in Africa.)

July

Prosperity, and Christian patriotism.—2 Chron. 34: 1–8.

Idolatry in business, fashion, education, and elsewhere.—Acts 17: 22–29.

What makes an honest man?—1 Thess. 4: 1–12; Eph. 5: 1–7.

How make our religion jubilant?—2 Cor. 10:

12–18. (Optional topic: Missions among the Mormons.

August

Presenting our bodies to God.—1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; Rom. 12: 1, 2.

God's voice in the trees.—1 Chron. 16: 29–34; Num. 24: 5–6.

Half-decided people: how to win them?—Josh. 24: 15–22.

Are we teaching our children of Christ?—Isa. 54: 11–17. (Optional topic: Latin-American Missions.)

September

Help for hesitant saints.—2 Cor. 12: 7–10.

Living daily in His presence.—John 16: 7–16.

Made wise for every emergency.—James 1: 1–8.

God's power put into our performance.—Matt. 19: 23–26; Eph. 3: 20, 21.

Strict self-judgment: liberal judgment of others.—Rom. 12: 3. (Optional topic: City Missions.)

October

Thanking God for flowers and fruit.—Mark 4: 26–29.

Profitable thinking about our hereafter.—Luke 16: 22–26.

Doing each day's duties to-day.—2 Peter 3: 12–14.

How hindrances may become helps.—2 Cor. 12: 7–10. (Optional topic: European Missions.)

November

Taking God into business and daily life.—1 Cor. 3: 9–13.

May a good man have too much money?—Jude 11, 12; Gen. 31: 36–42.

Where Christians are cowardly, or courageous.—Judges 6: 25–32; 7: 8–25.

Praise for the harvests.—Ps. 146: 1–10. (Optional topic: Missions among immigrants.)

December

The lessons of the snows.—Ps. 51: 7; 146: 16.

An hour with Bible mothers.—Ruth 2: 10–20. (Hannah, Mary, Eunice, etc.)

Are we positive enough in our faith?—Acts 4: 13–33; 7: 51–60.

The songs that ushered in Jesus.—Luke 1: 46–55; 1: 68–79; 2: 13, 14; 2: 29–35.

Some lessons from the old year.—Ps. 85: 1–13. (Optional topic: Missions in any of the untouched countries.)

DENOMINATIONAL MISSION BOARDS

African Methodist Episcopal, 61 Bible House, New York City.

African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Birmingham, Ala.

African Methodist Episcopal, Woman's Society, New Berne, N. C.

American Advent Missionary Society, 144 Hancock Street, Boston, Mass.

American Baptist Missionary Union, Ford Building, Boston.

American Baptist Home Mission Society, 111 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Women's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, Ford Building, Boston, Mass.

Women's Baptist Home Missionary Society, 2411 Indiana Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

Woman's American Baptist Home Missionary Society, Ford Building, Boston, Mass.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, 1103 Main Street, Richmond, Va.

Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 723, Austell Buildings, Atlanta, Ga.

Woman's Missionary Union, Southern Baptist Convention, 233 North Howard Street, Baltimore, Md.

Foreign Mission Board, Baptist Convention, Maritime Provinces, 85 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society, Wells Beach, Me.

Mission Board of the Christian Church, Dayton, O.

Foreign Missionary Society, Church of God, Shippensburg, Penn.

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Boston, Mass.

Congregational Home Missionary Society, Fourth Avenue and 22d Street, New York.

The American Missionary Association (Congregational), Fourth Avenue and 22d Street, New York.

Woman's Board of Foreign Missions (Congregational), Boston, Mass.

Woman's Board of Missions of the Interior, 59 Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific (Congregational), Oakland, Cal.

Canadian Congregational Foreign Missionary Society, London, Ont.

Canadian Congregational Woman's Board of Missions, Toronto, Ont.

Canadian Congregational Home Missionary Society, Toronto, Ont.

American Christian Missionary Society (Disciples), Cincinnati, O.

Christian Woman's Board of Missions, 152 East Market Street, Indianapolis, Ind.

Episcopal Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York.

Episcopal Woman's Auxiliary Board, Church Mission House, New York.

Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada, Toronto, Ont.

Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Episcopal Church, 2136 Frankford Avenue, Philadelphia, Penn.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Reformed Episcopal Church, 2106 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Penn.

Evangelical Association Missionary Society, 237 West Eleventh Street, Erie, Penn.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Evangelical Association, Dayton, O.

American Friends' Board of Foreign Missions, 261 Green Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Union of Friends, Carmel, Ind.

Board of Foreign Missions, Evangelical Lutheran Church, 19 West Saratoga Street, Baltimore, Md.

Lutheran Home Missionary Board, Baltimore, Md.

Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Society, Evangelical Lutheran Church, 406 North Green Street, Baltimore, Md.

Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America (General Synod) Board of Foreign Missions, 137 West School Lane, Philadelphia, Penn.

Lutheran Board of Foreign Missions, Free Church, Augsburg Seminary, Minneapolis, Minn.

Mennonite Mission Board (General Conference of North America), Quakertown, Penn.

Home Mission Board of the Mennonite General Conference, Mountain Lake, Minn.

Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Methodist Episcopal Church South Missionary Society, Nashville, Tenn.

Woman's Missionary Society, Methodist Church, Canada, 163 Hughson Street, North Hamilton, Ont.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 177 Pearl Street, Rochester, N. Y.

Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Delaware, O.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Box 405, Nashville, Tenn.

Methodist Church of Canada, Department of Missions, Toronto, Ont.

Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America, Missionary Society, 314 East Onondaga Street, Syracuse, N. Y.

Primitive Methodist Church in the United States of America, 47 Oakland Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Free Methodist Church of North America, General Missionary Board, 14 and 16 North May Street, Chicago, Ill.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Free Methodist Church, Greenville, Ill.

Methodist Protestant Board of Home Missions, West Lafayette, O.

Methodist Protestant Board of Foreign Missions, Adrian, Mich.

Methodist Protestant Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, 802 North Seventh Street, Kansas City, Kan.

The Society of the United Brethren for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen (Moravian), Bethlehem, Penn.

Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Presbyterian Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen, 516 Market Street, Pittsburg, Penn.

Presbyterian Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, 501 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, Penn.

Woman's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Executive Committee of Foreign Missions, of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (South), Nashville, Tenn.

Executive Committee of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (South), Atlanta, Ga.

Presbyterian Church in Canada, Foreign Missionary Committee, Western Division, 89 Confederation Life Bldg., Toronto, Ont.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Western Division, 98 Dunn Avenue, Toronto, Ont.

Presbyterian Church in Canada, Foreign Missionary Committee, Eastern Division, Halifax, N. S.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Eastern Division, 3 Fawson Street, Halifax, N. S.

Home Missionary Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Brantford, Ont.

Reformed Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board, 2102 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, Penn.

Woman's Board of Missions, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Evansville, Ind.

Cumberland Presbyterian Mission Board, Nashville, Tenn.

Reformed Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, 327 W. 56th Street, New York.

United Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, 921 Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia, Penn.

Woman's General Missionary Society, United Presbyterian Church, Boston, Mass.

Board of Foreign Missions, Reformed Church in America, 21 East 22d Street, New York.

Board of Domestic Missions, Reformed Church in America, 25 East 22d Street, New York.

Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, Reformed Church, 248 West 75th Street, New York.

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Reformed Church in the United States, Tiffin, O.

Board of Foreign Missions, Reformed Church in the United States, 1306 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Penn.

Board of Home Missions, Reformed Church in the United States, 457 North Queen Street, Lancaster, Penn.

The Mission Board of the General Conference of the Seventh Day Adventists, 267 West Main Street, Battle Breek, Mich.

Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 3 West 29th Street, New York.

Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant of America, North Park College, Chicago, Ill.

United Brethren Boards of Missions, Dayton, O.

Woman's Missionary Association of the United Brethren, Dayton, O.

United Evangelical Church Board of Missions, York, Penn.

Woman's Board of Missions, United Evangelical Church, York, Penn.

Interdenominational Young People's Missionary Movement, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

$17.00